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A WOMEN'S LIBERATION MAGAZINE
JULY 1977 ISSUE NO. 60



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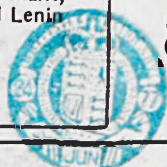
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On the cover we've used an International Feminist Symbol. We thought it came from Italy (see SR 51 & 59) but found evidence of its widespread use in Scandinavia, Holland, France, USA and Great Britain.

Spare Rib has produced posters, badges and stickers using the symbol. See Classifieds for prices.

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Spare Rib is produced collectively by Rose Ades, Anny Brackx, Liza Vine, Alison Fell, Sue Hobbs, Laura Margolis, Gabriel Mills, Natasha Morgan, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Linda Phillips, Jane Prince, Michele Roberts, Eleanor Stephens, Mary Youngson.

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Competitive Trendyism

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Carol Riddell's letter about the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) conference (SR 58) reminds me why I don't bother to go to these occasions any more. Her letter reads like Jennifer's Diary in *Vogue*. The coy use of Christian names (who is Sandra? and Anne? it sounds as though I'm supposed to know these people) reminds me of the clubby, in-group atmosphere of competitive trendyism I found so depressing at the last WLM conference I attended (in Bristol). Specifically, it depressed me then because there seemed to be an indefinable, but all-pervasive atmosphere — something to do with the lesbian definition of a heterosexual as 'straight' which is also the perjorative hip definition for someone non-hip, whatever that means — which dumped together 'straights' and 'politicos' as 'unliberated', because we worked with men, or we slept with them.

It took me some years to realise how absurd it was that, having thrown off the bourgeois values which made me feel apologetic and guilty about my sexuality ('promiscuous' etc.), it should now be a few arrogant voices in the WLM which were making me feel apologetic about my sexuality again ("collaboration with the oppressor", "you have to get away from men before you can feel free" etc.).

The fact is, most women choose to live with men and will go on choosing to do so. Separatism and cultivation of 'woman-space' is not a solution to our problems, and I believe that until the WLM does concern itself much more actively, and publicly, with the problems faced by women living the way most women live, i.e. with men (and abortion and wife-beating are but two), it will remain a cliquey, feminist club, to be approached with trepidation as the letter from the Teesside women's group (SR 58) so sadly shows.

I now feel ready to re-enter the fray — but no guilt-tripping about our lovers, sisters, please.

Ann Pettitt
London E1

Wearing The Wrong Things

In one of the reports of the Women's Liberation conference (SR 58) a sister described satirically what the women were wearing. She concluded that we looked trendy and very uniform.

*Dear *Spare Rib*,

The reports of the conference were excellent but a small piece in them I didn't quite get the point of — the 'conference fashion' bit. I thought it was funny up till the last paragraph. After all the discussion about class at the conference it seemed a bit of a contradiction to say blah-di-blah, "... we wonder why our mothers/factory-workers/typists/OAPs don't join us". They do. I'm a typist myself. Most women travelled a way to get to the conference and probably wore

letter

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the easiest clothes possible. One of the ways that Women's Liberation has reached the 'ordinary' woman (whoever that might be) is to let her wear clothes that she feels comfortable in, whatever they are! It seems a small point to make but don't let's get to the stage where we're so self-critical that whatever we do is wrong.

Lots of love and sisterhood
Anne Tasker
Liverpool

Catering For All Tastes

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I disagree with Sarah Ward when she writes (SR 58) that prostitutes should not expect support from feminists in their campaign to legalise prostitution.

By describing the idea that prostitution is an essential social service as "an old myth which merely panders to the androcentric nature of our exploitative society", Sarah makes it clear that she believes the desire for casual sex to be an exclusively male province. It should be clear to all feminists that this is not so. Women and men both have a capacity for enjoying sex on a purely physical level, and, while it is true that this is largely suppressed in women by the upbringing we receive, there are even now many women in our society who can and do enjoy sex on that basis.

In the truly egalitarian society which we're fighting for, there should surely be both male and female prostitutes, of whom some would cater for heterosexual, and some for homosexual tastes.

I think we should give PROs all the support we can.

With love
Sheila Miller
London W14



More Poems

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am sixteen years old, still at school, and have been reading your magazine for over a year now. I have a passion for literature, and think you ought to try and devote more space to printing material being produced by women today.

I enjoyed the series of fiction from the Women's Writers' Collec-

tive, and 'A Week Like Any Other', but I am disgusted at the miserable amount of poetry you print, and the quality of that you do. I was so annoyed at the Stephanie Smolensky poems that I was spurred to put pen to paper to see if I could do better! As a result I offered two poems for our school magazine. One, a satire about Starsky and Hutch was banned because it contained the words 'virile and butch'. The other, about Ulrike Meinhof, was printed only after the headmistress had expressed her disapproval of its 'left-wing political overtones'.

It was not the first time I had come to blows at school. I once was reprimanded for describing St Paul as misogynous and sexist!

I have to travel right into the centre of Manchester every month to get my *Spare Rib* as I cannot afford a subscription. But it is well worth the trouble because it is my only contact with the Women's Movement, being stuck out in the wilds.

Yours
Anna O'Connor
Altrincham

A Girl's Best Friend

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I read your article 'A Girl's Best Friend' (SR 58) and decided to tell you about myself. I am fifteen and go to a middle class girls comprehensive school. I come from a one-parent family and live with my mother and sisters. In general my life is ordinary.

I found your article true to the values of my friends, especially the piece about 'outcasts' from society (usually female) who don't conform to our high 'moral' standards. I went through such a dismissal (in a gentle form) and have taken this last year to settle and make friends.

One thing I found disturbing was the fact that all interviewed claimed they only went out with a boy for a week at a time. Most of my friends have been 'going steady' at one time or still are. I think perhaps the interviewees were either unlucky or biased.

In our class at school there is a network of friends who interchange partners in small groups. But some of us form a rigid structure which is comforting but sometimes restricting.

I wholeheartedly agree with the comments on fashion and make-up. I do not usually conform strictly to these, but to enforce your views you have to wear some of the uniform if not all.

I mix freely with boys and have a current boyfriend, but I treat him as I would any other friend and our relationship is mere, but not all, brother-sister.

All my love
Younger Reader Deb
Old Coulsdon Surrey

The Right Combination

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Decrease: politically 'left' content.
Increase: problems of single/working women (either class).
Increase: financial resources to make *Spare Rib* more accessible — advertise — push *Spare Rib*...

Not easy, I know. But in the right combination, could make your magazine very popular amongst the 'thinking about liberation' women — and surely that's got to be an increasing number.

Yours etc
Salim Wadiwala
London W5

Italian Sisters Fight Back

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I read your magazine last year, when I was in England. I liked it very much.

In Italy, feminism is getting big, but, just now, confusion, sadness, and anger is in many of us. We have to fight against Parliament! A bad abortion law is passing; a reform of health, of the hospitals is still too far.

Women are raped; women march in protest against these events; legal authority says even that women rape themselves! Man's supremacy exists even where it's well hidden.

But the Women's Movement is trying to find some new instruments of struggle. How? With our fantasy, our industry, our love or with the guns. Let's take back our life, our joy.

With love
An Italian sister

Miraculous Cure

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Having for too many years been a near-chronic thrush sufferer, a new doctor put me onto Lactic Acid Pessaries with miraculous results. More preventative than curative, really, keeping the vaginal environment balanced; use when the first itch starts. They're sold (I don't know if you can get them off prescription) as Tampovagan pessaries or McCarthys BPC 5% W/W.

I think there are many people who, like me, have tried everything — yoghurt, vinegar douches, etc. No success until now!

Thanks
J H
London N19

*indicates letters have been cut for reasons of space

Portrait of the Artist as Housewife



"They had houses, children, lives of habit and habitation. They were trapped in an especially painful way. Their spirits yearning to travel, their bodies committed to men, to children, to houses."¹

Feministo, the women's postal art event, could be described as a life-line for trapped women. Growing numbers are exchanging small art works through the post.

It began in 1975 when Sally Gollop, isolated on the Isle of Wight, and Kate Walker in London started sending other images which expressed the feelings of women confined by childcare and domestic responsibility. An early work from Sally, for example, took the form of a miniature kitchen dresser with shelves like bars across the window. Cups obscured the view and with the crockery hung hands and a brain.

The two involved their friends and the numbers have slowly increased. Some were inspired to join by shows of the work in England, Scotland and Germany, others heard about it on the radio or answered an invitation in *Spare Rib*. Maybe one day "Portrait of the Artist as Housewife", as they call exhibitions of the work, will become a vast, subversive international network.

The significance of Feministo goes way beyond individual art works. Both the *form* and *content* of the art take up many of the criticisms that the women's movement has levelled at established art practice.

It undermines, for example, the idea of the isolated genius (the artist who, whether they wish it or not, intimidates others from producing), by revealing the collective basis of inspiration: "images are reiterated in different people's

One swallow doesn't make a summer

work, images and ideas aren't private property".² And as each woman can reply directly to the work she receives, the division between art producer and consumer begins to be broken down. Art practice becomes a living process — more of a dialogue.

Perhaps because Feministo is like a visual discussion, a long distance consciousness raising session, it avoids simplistic polemics. The images are neither idealistic (women are strong, wonderful, invincible) nor despairing (women are helpless, hopeless, victims). Instead the work explores the complexity of our relationship to our sexuality, domesticity, motherhood and romanticism. It's often witty, irreverent and most subversive when, as in a consciousness raising group, a number of women contribute to the same theme.

The destructive conflict we experience between being a consumer, a commodity and a nurturer is analysed in images of food. A box of Black Magic chocolates opens to reveal fragments of women's bodies symbolizing the way women are portrayed as "something to be enjoyed", until we too accept our bodies as commodities, seeing ourselves through other people's eyes and believing that parts of our bodies are desirable and other parts are disaster areas. Another box, filled with smiling, pleasing mouths is titled "Keep Smiling Chocs".

Then there's the plate of salad with a reclining nude — the image of women which most directly conflicts with their activity as artists — lying instead of ham amongst cucumber, lettuce and tomatoes.

A golden, appetising, plaster pie bears the words "The Safe Way Humble Pie", which reading between the pie crust could spell adapt, conform, compromise. The hours consumed by shopping, cooking and feeding are symbolised by strings of knitted zippered sandwiches or a saucepan sawn in half and filled with crocheted cauliflower.

Nearly all the pieces manage to convey both the appeal of domesticity and the bitterness and disillusion. This is part of the show's political strength. Certain images predominate: butterflies impaled or escaping, masks reflecting the shifts of identity daily demanded of women, windows simultaneously forming prison bars and frames for domestic dreams.

I think the same ambivalence is reflected in the materials used. There's nostalgia as well as rebellion in the scraps of cloth, old photographs, packaging and supermarket trays — sterile, depressing yet seductive. The materials also reflect women's limited resources, and in some cases, a rejection of the "complex technology which has become an integral part of the established art scene". And because much of the work is flimsy it has an impermanence which the women value. Most want to make statements rather than consumer objects.

Techniques vary. The show contains a great deal of assemblage, some painting and drawing, but a lot is knitted or sewn. On one level the use of craft validates women's traditional skills and emphasises how much pleasure there is in, for example, crocheting. On another level it draws



To Kate on Mothers Day. Crysetteus Prickum



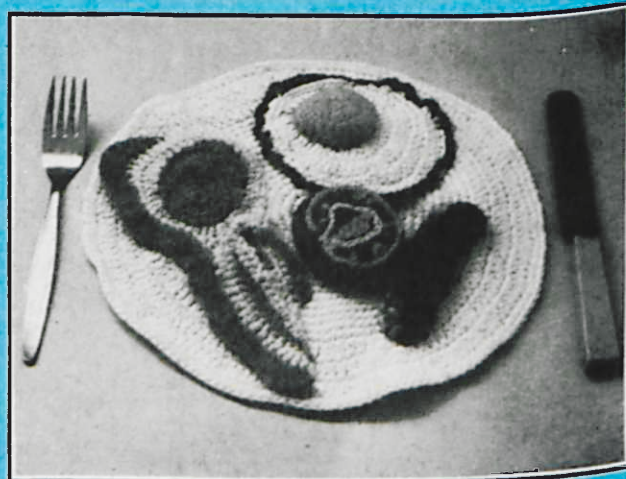
Self-clown portrait



Mirror Mask



Christmas Tree



Crocheted Breakfast



Bound and gagged



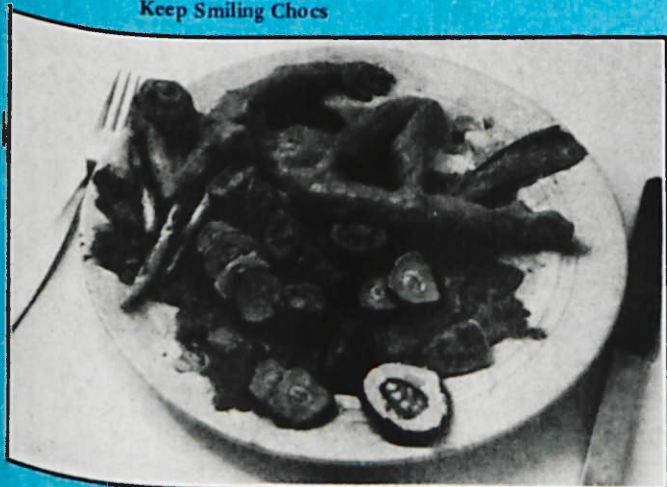
Sanctuary



Black Magic Bodies



Keep Smiling Chocs



Salad Plate

attention to the way our time and energy has been absorbed by our massive contribution to the domestic economy: knitting, sewing and furnishing the home.

Because all that work was done for immediate use in the home, not for the cultural market for love not money — its creativity has been discounted. A pink and blue knitted panel, still hanging from the needles, picks up this theme. It reads "Heart Not Art, Homemade I'm Afraid."

If craftwork is valued, it's out of nostalgia or out of admiration for an individual skill. The symbolic significance craftworks had or have for women is usually overlooked despite the fact that feminist art historians continue to draw attention to the content and social role of craft production. And like the 18th century women who sent each other Friendship Samplers, the women of Feministo exchange stitched messages, only their samplers read "Wife is a Four Letter Word".

But does this long distance communication break down the isolation of a woman at home with children? Some criticise Feministo saying it simply confirms women in their role as housewives, and like the Friendship Samplers, does little more than ease loneliness. It goes much further than that; in raising women's consciousness it also sustains their belief in making art of their own experience. As Tricia Davis points out, before Feministo she "made things, hid them, destroyed them and grew increasingly frustrated with the whole process."³ And after Feministo? "I still sometimes feel self conscious or hesitant about making things . . . but I go on doing it. Partly because although art is by nature individual, I see myself as part of a large group of women working in different media, using different skills."

By providing audience and feedback, Feministo has given women who have abandoned art the incentive to start again, while women who've never seen themselves as artists gain the confidence to try making things. A postal event provides a relatively safe beginning for someone who may have reached the state Michelene Wandor describes: "The security of the home and its deceptive freedom from immediate control operative in any work situation have their own backlash. You lose contact with any sense of the 'real' world, you think in frames of reference and a language looked down upon by most people. After a while you come to relish the misery of this isolation as a frying pan alternative to the fire of exposure as a possible failure; after years of being used to living in a home alone with your children, you become terrified of confronting the world of work and other people outside your family."⁴

Not all the women in Feministo wanted to risk showing the work in public, but most believe it is politically important. They are, after all, fighting both the art world and sexism by bringing domestic imagery into the open.

They try to create a new form of exhibition, showing the context of the work by pinning up the letters the women send to each other with the art works. Their aim is to unite "apparently disparate aspects — the private, domestic and personal with political and social under-



Clockwork Heart



The First Step



Part of the furniture



Rape cup and saucer



The Great Stuffed Baby

standing". Exhibiting homemade works begins to challenge the split between the public and domestic spheres, between "home and work", validating women's work in the home as "work".

Visitors pick up on the protest. "Miserable bitches," commented one man. "Bitter and twisted," said another. "I don't see what all the fuss is about." While North West Arts Association who housed their first show put up a notice reading "Unsuitable for Children".

That struck the women as particularly ironic. Most of them work on the kitchen table "in between making the tea and doing the ironing", constantly interrupted by children. "Anything you do is a threat to your child's security, the child knows that it's totally dependent on you and, in self defence, becomes a tyrant making petty compulsive demands to be reassured."⁴

A number of women artists are using domestic imagery -- usually polemically -- to analyse or draw attention to woman's role as housewife and mother. *Feministo*, however, provides a way of overcoming some of the material difficulties a home worker has to contend with. It makes use of small scale art which takes up neither too much space nor time. Few women possess studios which partly explains why women's work tends to be more integrated with their lives. The materials the postal event women use and the images they create are part of their everyday reality. They want to "develop a visual language that is accessible to women in that it corresponds to their own experience."

Such a language has a long history in women's art -- even in oil painting. The sixteenth century painter Sofonisba Anguiscola invented the type of portraiture known as "domestic genre" with a picture of her sisters playing chess. But domestic genre was always considered a secondary art form to male dominated historical or mythological subjects. For "though the virtues of domesticity are upheld on a verbal level, social practice confers all prestige on man's achievement orientated role". *Feministo* steers a course between "celebrating the area of domestic creativity and 'women's world' and exposing it for its paucity".

With much of the work, the spectator's response will be invoked by their personal experience, their fantasies and their relationship to the family and sexuality. It can be threatening. "You just want to make people as unhappy as yourselves," said one woman defensively. It's hard to predict whether feminist imagery will fill a woman with anger and insecurity, or with instant recognition and relief, but no one can remain unmoved by *Portrait of the Artist* as "Housewife". □

by Rozsika Parker

At the ICA, London June 10-July 20, then to Melbourne, Australia.

- 1 *How to Save Your Own Life* by Erica Jong
- 2 *Spare Rib* review by Phil Goodall
- 3 *Mama* feminist arts magazine
- 4 *Conditions of Illusion*, Michelene Wandor, feminist press
- 5 *The Great Divide* Open University Art and Environment Unit 6 by Michelene Wandor, Kathy Henderson, Maureen McCue and Susan Treisman

An article on *Feministo* by Rozsika Parker has appeared in the women's issue of *Studio International* magazine

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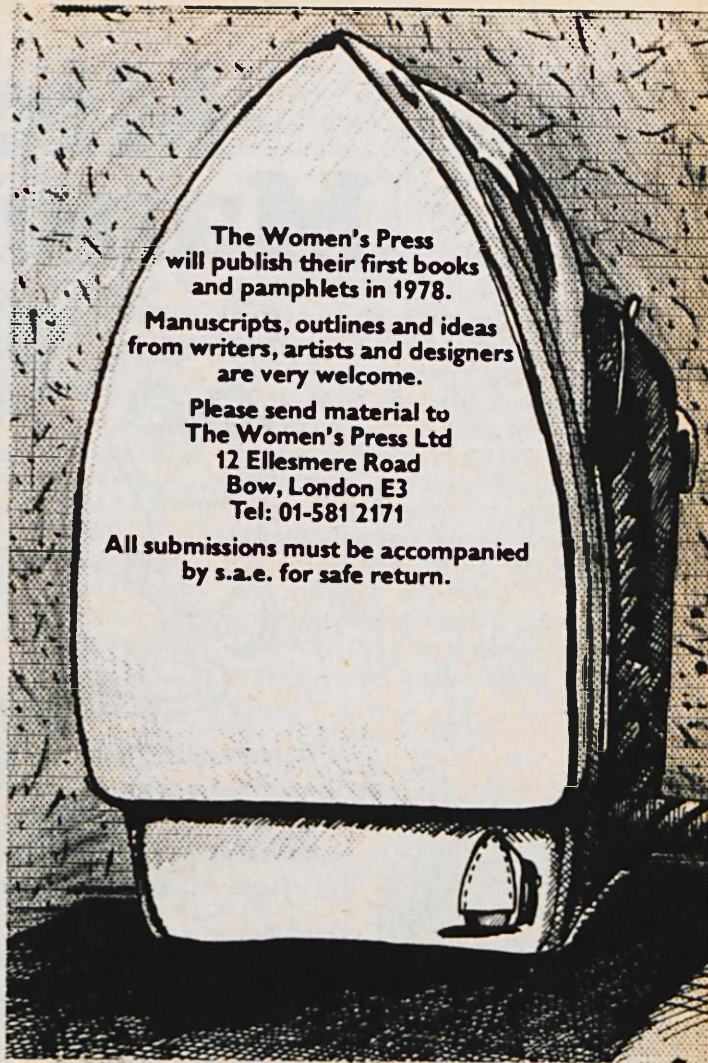
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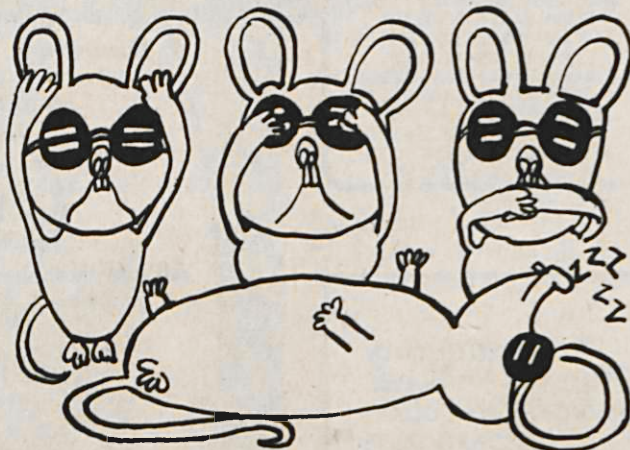
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Mice in Manchester



Attacked by Thatcher as a waste of public money, and by the Left as a reformist diversion, two out of three people have never even heard of it. So what is the Equal Opportunities Commission and what's it been up to for the past eighteen months? Rose Ades and Eleanor Stephens tried to find out.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was set up in 1975 under The Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) as a testament to the Labour Party's continuing concern about the position of women. It's overall brief was to abolish discrimination against women and to promote equality. For a kick off, the government gave them a budget of over a million pounds for the first year (which they didn't manage to spend), three floors of a shiny new office block in Manchester and a staff of about a hundred seconded civil servants. They're headed by fifteen commissioners appointed by the Home Secretary who meet once a month to make all policy decisions.

While not expecting revolutionary action from a government body, and accepting its own definition of itself as a "middle aged Establishment pressure group" we did expect to see some results after a year and a half. The EOC does, after all, have formal powers of investigation backed up by legal sanctions, no shortage of things crying out to be investigated and, unlike Women's Liberation groups, easy access to government and the power to amend legislation. Yet they've made very little impact: as one feminist, herself involved for years in bureaucratic struggles, put it, "They crept off like mice to Manchester and we've hardly heard a squeak out of them since." Why not?



THE GREAT AND THE GOOD

The Chairman (she insists on this title) is Betty Lockwood, appointed to the Commission in return for nearly thirty years of service to the Labour Party, the last eight as Chief Women's Officer. Similarly experienced in party politics, and also a committee woman, is her deputy Lady Howe, married to the Shadow Chancellor. This political balancing act is unique among statutory bodies — maybe they'd have to change places under a Tory government! Certainly it's a factor in the Commission's

obvious difficulties in reaching decisions, taking actions and making swift public statements on relevant issues. (Lockwood and Howe are the EOC's only public voices.)

Three of the commissioners are nominated by the TUC and three by the CBI. They tend to act as a block to maintain the status quo and guard their own territory of traditional bargaining. Do they see themselves as accountable to the bodies they represent or to the Commission? These roles often conflict and neither of the TUC women, Ethel

A brief guide through the red tape

EOC: OVERSEAS HOUSE, QUAY ST., MANCHESTER M3 3HN. TEL: 061-833 9244, LONDON PRESS OFFICE 01-629 8233.

1. **General duties:** to work towards the elimination of discrimination to promote equality of opportunity. To review the workings of the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts and where necessary to suggest amendments. The EOC can also look at areas outside the scope of these Acts (eg. social security, nationality, taxation,) and suggest amendments.
2. **Investigations:** The EOC has power to conduct formal investigations on its own initiative into any area where discrimination is suspected. It can insist that relevant information is produced and as a result can recommend changes of practice and/or law.
3. **Non-Discrimination Notices:** If, as the result of a formal investigation, the EOC finds that the SDA or EP Act has been contravened, it can issue a non-discrimination notice which requires that the person/organisation obeys the law. If the notice is ignored, the EOC can apply for a court injunction forcing the offender to obey.
4. **Individual cases:** The EOC has a duty to inform and advise the public about the Acts and their rights under these laws. It can, at its own discretion, take up cases on behalf of individuals and give help (legal and financial) in pursuing them through the tribunals or courts. All employment cases are heard at Industrial Tribunals, all others go through county courts.
5. **Education and Research:** it can undertake research and education projects and assist (financially and otherwise) groups outside the EOC working in this area.
6. The EOC is the only body with power to deal with unlawful job advertisements.

(adapted from 'The Equality Report' by Jean Coussins, NCCL)

Chipchase and Marie Patterson (see last month's SR) are known to represent women except in a token way.

The other 'independent' commissioners were chosen from the official civil service lists of The Great and The Good (these lists exist!) and they represent, among others, Education, Scotland, Wales and the Law. As far as we could discover none had been at all involved in pushing the anti-discrimination laws through or in any other women's rights groups — though one had written speeches for Roy Jenkins, the then Home Secretary. Several women's groups and agencies like the National Council of Civil Liberties (NCCCL) had put forward well qualified feminist candidates but none were chosen, although similar bodies like the Consumer Council do have 'interest groups' represented on them. At the moment there is a vacancy to be filled, but there's no way of finding out on what grounds the Home Office will make the appointment. Last week this question was asked in the House of Commons and the answer was a predictable example of parliamentary evasion.

Among the commissioners only Caroline Woodroffe, head of Brook Advisory Centres, a family planning agency, has any obvious professional involvement with women and from talking to her, some sympathetic awareness of their needs. On the whole they are competent professionals of the 'I did it myself and so can you' school. Two women involved in campaigning for the legislation told us: "It was such a shock when we saw who they'd appointed as commissioners. We knew then that the whole thing was going to be a farce. We had never really discussed the role of the Commission but we knew it could only be as good as the people on it. We needed people committed to women with the will to fight for changes."

So what has the EOC been doing? Despite their full cooperation we found this hard to discover: when we asked commissioners and staff members what they had been working on and what were their immediate priorities, we were nearly always referred back to the EOC's *strategic role* (a phrase used again and again in press releases) and the importance of doing nothing which would jeopardise long term strategy. What is this strategy? This, we were told, would have to wait upon their present efforts to discover the extent of the problem. As Betty Lockwood told us: "We haven't yet defined what we're going to have to look at." Were we being impatient or impertinent to expect more than this after a year and a half and a million pounds?

The EOC has wide powers to investigate discrimination and promote equality. Under the SDA it has to work in three main areas: Goods, Facilities and Services; Employment; and Education. As well as making sure that everyone is aware of her rights and his obligations (!) it has a duty to see whether these laws are strong enough, to suggest improvements and to look at areas like taxation and social security not covered by the act.

So what happens when evidence of discrimination is brought to the EOC's attention? (In general it doesn't go out to find it.) Believing that it's basically in everyone's interests not to discriminate against women, the EOC likes to use Softly Softly methods of persuasion. Betty Lockwood and most of the Commission seem genuinely to believe that no one really benefits from the exploitation of women — they only need to be shown that discrimination is bad for business or the labour movement, and then they'll automatically shape up: "If we're going to succeed in any area we've got to have the goodwill and cooperation of *all* who are involved; there's no point our being involved in a head on clash." This political viewpoint is at the root of their failure to recognise the vested interests involved in keeping things the way they are and that to have any effect at all, they'll have to take a much stronger stand. We looked at how they've approached the three main areas.

so the EOC are keen to support women in bringing cases, especially since at the moment they won't issue non-discrimination notices on their own initiative. (see box) It's attempts to persuade Local Authorities to stop discriminating against women on housing matters have been almost entirely ignored.

EDUCATION: "THIS WOULD BE CENSORSHIP."

In education the emphasis has also been on high level consultation but it's even harder here to see any concrete results. We do know they took the initiative in getting quotas abolished, like the Open University quotas, some of which had had the effect of positively discriminating in favour of women. As for the Tameside investigation into the selection of grammar school places, it's generally agreed to be a complete red herring.

Some interest was expressed in setting up a working party to examine sex stereotypes in school textbooks, but they've



Betty Lockwood, "Chairman"

Lady Elspeth Howe, Deputy.

SERVICES: "WHAT'S THE OTHER CHAP AFRAID OF?"

Their preference of working behind the scenes with informal fix-it-up tactics ("We have to see what the other chap's afraid of" we were told) has had some success in consumer service areas like hire purchase and credit — particularly with trade associations and central management whose business depends on good public relations. But even if, after letters, phone calls or visits, Head Office agrees to cooperate, local branches are not obliged to stop discriminating unless someone takes them to the county court. So far only five cases have been brought under this section of the SDA and three of these are still waiting.

The county court system costs money and is so unwieldy that you'll almost certainly have to stay angry about being refused a pint, or a cup of coffee after ten at night, for at least a year! But until a case is won no legal precedent can be set,

already made it clear that they wouldn't dream of using any legal pressure to change it — "This would be censorship" said Eileen Byrne. They aren't even planning to issue guidelines to publishers, but they have given a little money to Spare Rib and Virago to produce educational materials. Some staff members are very keen to see the EOC take action on day care and a working party has just been set up to look into this. We certainly hope they'll make some headway, and not accept the Cuts as an excuse for government inaction.

EMPLOYMENT: "OUR MAIN THRUST."

Everyone we spoke with admitted that the employment section has been fraught with difficulties — "A complete non-starter" said one staff member — and several new staff, including the head of department, have just begun work. Given the crucial importance of this area for

women — "This is our main thrust" said Betty Lockwood — their almost total inactivity here beyond answering enquiries is pathetic. Not only have the Cuts and unemployment hit women hardest but the difference between men and women's average hourly earnings has actually increased in the past two years.

We were told by the legal officer, Jennifer Corcoran, who monitors all the tribunal results on equal pay, that "some companies have ten cases clocked up against them, but we were hesitant to recommend that the employment section responded to this as we felt it was more important that they should work out their own emphasis and areas to work on." This may be sensible in theory but in fact they still haven't decided what these areas are. Until February 13 this year they hadn't used their powers of formal investigation at all, and they only started to investigate Electrolux (see News SR 57) after a pep talk from the Home Secretary and a specific request from Justice Phillips, president of the Employment Appeals Tribunal. This investigation is still in progress and they have no idea when it will be completed.

Legally the EOC can conduct a formal investigation wherever discrimination is suspected (it's hard to think of anywhere this would be inappropriate!) and if this results in issuing a non-discrimination notice with legal sanctions, the offender(s) have to change their ways whatever the cost or they can go to prison. This would give us something comparable to America's very powerful 'class action suit' whereby a group can take a case — though with British laws, we still couldn't get such huge sums in compensation. So what stops the EOC using this, their most powerful weapon? Apart from their fear of combat and terror of making themselves unpopular, they treat formal investigations as mammoth two year projects only to be used with extreme caution as a last resort. There's no reason why this should be: given that things are getting worse all the time for women, investiga-

tions should be swift and sharp. It's not essential to have a complete dossier, with every extenuating circumstance, before issuing a non-discrimination notice. If the EOC was known to move quickly, this could make them a force to be reckoned with, rather than weakening their behind-the-scenes bargaining position as they fear.

As it is, their main achievement has been to post a letter to 500 employers asking them about their policies and practices for promoting equal opportunities. No one has to answer it (several companies have told them to get lost) and they are not going to be investigated further. There is no way for the EOC to know whether the version they receive from the employers tally with what the workers would say, if asked, unless someone happens to make a complaint or goes on strike for equal pay! In fact the EOC sent one of these November letters to the Laird Portch company in East Kilbride, where the women have recently come out on strike for Equal Pay. (see News.) There are plans to use the answers to these letters as the basis for their long-awaited guidelines of best employment practices. Unlike the statutory code they originally planned, it has no legal force but can be more outspoken. As the EOC has so far taken little initiative itself in the area of employment, everything depends upon cases being brought to tribunals by individuals with the help of their unions, the NCCL or the EOC.

And as regular Spare Rib readers will know, the tribunal results are hardly likely to inspire women to do this.

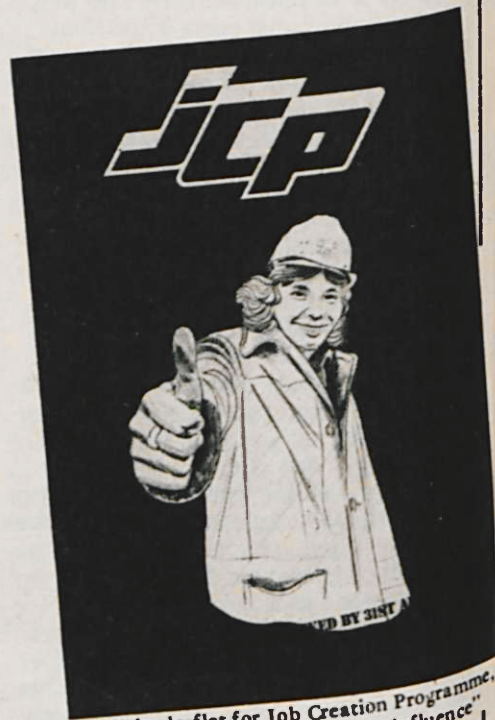
Betty Lockwood has tried to influence the composition of the industrial tribunals and offered training for their members, but the Chairman of the Council of Industrial Tribunals has turned her down: after all Equal Pay cases are only 6% of the total. But it's extraordinary that the EOC has made no public statements criticising these decisions, and remained silent over the five month Trico strike. It's very fortunate for women that Justice Phillips,

head of the Appeals Tribunals and an expert in Inland Revenue law, has chosen to base his judgements on the spirit of the law. So the appeals results are a great improvement.

A REAL POWER BASE?

The Commission does claim considerable influence at government level, which lies beyond the scope of most women's groups. They've submitted evidence to the Department of Education on student grants, and recently to the Royal Commission on Distribution of Wealth, showing both how women suffer economically from their dual role and the hidden poverty of married women. They also sent a deputation to the Chancellor attacking the sexist basis of personal taxation.

Two reports have just been published



Publicity leaflet for Job Creation Programme, where EOC claims "considerable influence"

evaluating the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the Job Creation Programmes. Since the 16-19 age group is one of the EOC's stated priority target areas, we expected to see signs of their influence here. Betty Lockwood told us: "We have a considerable influence in the MSC and quite frankly I would like to establish a real power base there." The House and Commons Expenditure Committee report showed that three quarters of the jobs go to boys, with girls still channelled into traditional slots like typing and laundry work. It pointed out that some of this can be explained by the fact that the Area Organisers, nominated by the TUC and CBI, comprise two women and sixty five men. It deplores

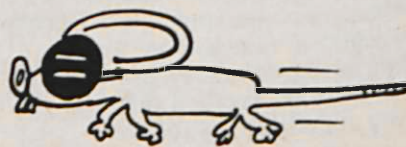
A Swedish model for the EOC!

Recently we heard of an experimental project in Sweden to introduce women (some of whom had never worked) into traditionally male jobs. We were struck by the imagination of this project and even more struck that it was initiated and funded by the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister On Equality between Men and Women — a government body set up in 1972 similar to the EOC.

The scheme challenges the fact that the labour market is in practice divided into two, with women concentrated in the narrow sector: over 70% of women are in 25 occupations whereas men are in more than 300. The pilot project was started in Kristianstad County in the south of Sweden where there were many 'male jobs' available and many unemployed women.

Companies and trade unions were persuaded to participate and take on women, and the women were introduced to the scheme, with childcare and transport arranged. For a trial period, women were paid by the Labour Market Administration and were free to leave or try another job until they found a job they wanted. Local Adjustment Groups were set up to help the new workers not just with work problems but with domestic and personal difficulties arising from the changes in the division of labour at home. The project report emphasises the inequality caused by the woman's dual role and the importance of working through schools, training programmes and the unions to change men's expectations.

The report shows that women can handle these jobs as well as men (except for a few heavy jobs that most men can't manage) and almost all chose to stay on a permanent basis. It points out that many typically female jobs are very heavy and differ from men's work only in being much more poorly paid. Because of the success of the scheme it is now being extended to six other counties.



the discriminatory practices of these schemes and makes proposals for improving them. If the MSC is an area of EOC influence, perhaps the time has come to start using this influence.

Their role in influencing government and exerting pressure from the top down was often emphasised as the main reason for their lack of militancy, their desire not to be identified with 'irresponsible elements' and their fear of being partisan. ("We might gladden the hearts of thousands of women, but this could lead to a backlash" we were told.) So far, there's little evidence that this sacrifice has been worthwhile.

SMILING FACES

While the EOC's existence has had some consciousness raising effect on women's expectations and is an acknowledgement of the extent of the discrimination that needs to be tackled, it had no publicity campaign in 1976. Because of confusion over its desired public image, its first Press Officer, Sandra Oliver, who lasted six months, wasn't allowed to spend any of her budget. Finally in February this year there was a one day national press campaign costing £56,000 to advertise some of the smiling faces at the EOC. They now agree that this wasn't the right

emphasis, and that subsequent campaigns will have a wider perspective. We're not quite sure what this will be: "The Commission has accepted at a recent meeting that the image that the Commission wishes to project will change from time to time. Sometimes it will be low profile, sometimes a persuasive one and sometimes a much sharper one." was Betty Lockwood's statement when we asked her about this.

Obviously the EOC's most effective publicity comes from what it does and its own public statements. While it issues frequent and lengthy press releases, usually based on speeches by Lockwood and Howe, these are rarely taken up because they're not newsworthy. (On two issues where the EOC's voice might have had some impact — Child Benefits and the Benyon Bill — they said nothing.) The Press Officer's job is not a happy one.

Many of the problems and criticisms we've raised have been put down to teething problems and of course some are to be expected in any organisation. But despite all the talk of new initiatives and improved working relationships between staff and commissioners, there's little evidence of any real change in attitude or a greater understanding of

the power struggle involved. It's true that some of the staff are increasingly committed to what they're trying to do but this only adds to their frustration when so much of their ideas and work is ignored or blocked at the top.

Even more depressing, the EOC may actually be doing more harm than good. Without the courage and the will to battle for changes, it takes the heat off other institutions and serves to keep people quiet and things as they are. We certainly hope that now it's teething problems are over things will change dramatically. Otherwise it's real problem can only be the fear of showing any teeth at all. □



The official version — the Annual Report — is due out on June 3.

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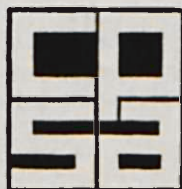
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"The ultimate weapon in the war between the sexes: the limp prick. The banner of the enemy's encampment: the prick at half-mast. The symbol of the apocalypse: the atomic warhead prick which self-destructs. *That* was the basic inequity which could never be righted: not that the male had a wonderful added attraction called a penis, but that the female had a wonderful all-weather cunt. Neither storm nor sleet nor dark of night could faze it. No wonder men hated women. No wonder they invented the myth of female inadequacy.

" 'I refuse to be impaled upon a pin,' Adrian said, unaware of the pun it immediately brought to mind. 'I refuse to be categorized. When you finally do sit down to write about me, you won't know whether I'm a hero or an anti-hero, a bastard or a saint. You won't be able to categorize me.'

"And at that moment, I fell madly in love with him. His limp prick had penetrated where a stiff one would never have reached."

From *Fear of Flying*, Erica Jong's first novel. Her second, *How To Save Your Own Life* published here last April, hated by reviewers, shot to the top of the best sellers. She came to the Savoy in London to promote the new book.

Interview by Rozsika Parker and Eleanor Stephens

In *Fear of Flying* you write about all the 'itches' that marriage creates, you say "How could you sit on a train fucking total strangers with your eyes? How could you do that to your husband? Did anyone ever tell you that maybe it had nothing to do with your husband?" You make it clear that you blame marriage itself for the problems couples have, yet in *How To Save Your Own Life* you seem to be saying find the right man and live happily ever after. Isadora leaves Bennet for Josh — Mr Right. Have your ideas on marriage changed?

I would never stand for a relationship with someone where fidelity was legally enforced, where it wasn't understood that there might be times when we would not be faithful to one another. It's a very different thing to go lovingly into a monogamous relationship because you are fond of someone and want to be faithful, than to enter into something that at heart is an economic contract in which the woman is selling her body, womb and services for a livelihood and social status.

But you've said that free choice hardly comes into making the decision to live as a couple — "It's heresy in America to embrace any way of life except as half of a couple". And you go on to describe the suffering that comes from living isolated

with one other person, yet you are still saying it's the answer?

You know it's so dangerous when we read novels as polemics. Just because *How To Save Your Own Life* has a happy ending, I'm not saying unequivocally that women can all find true love and happiness, and that if they are unhappy it's because they haven't found the right man. I'm more subtle than that. I'm not that dumb. Also there's the dark side to Josh and Isadora's relationship. There's love, there's a romantic readiness, there's an opening but there's also a kind of rivalry developing. Even in this relationship which is so close there's the snake in the garden, discontent.

What makes it romantic is the notion of the lover being your other half, a sort of long lost brother. If we search the world and find this person then we've got a good chance...

In some way I believe that. I believe it is possible to find a man who is a friend as well as a lover. I think men and women are brought up to hate each other, and they fulfill their programming all too grimly well; they become enemies and their lives divide down the middle. But if one finds a kind of liberation — and God knows it's hard enough because we are all very culture bound. If you reach a

point where you don't need a man for social status or money, only for affection, good comradeship, and, hopefully, good sex, you may choose a much better sort of man than you would have had you needed someone desperately. Mostly in their twenties women are looking for a daddy, for a protector. In their thirties they look for a companion and that's already an improvement. But speaking personally, and I will speak personally without saying that I've done everything in the book which I haven't, or that I'm indistinguishable from Isadora which I'm not, but in my own life my relationships with men have never been better. It's partly because I now think that if I have to live alone, I'll live alone. I'm not so afraid of it. And as soon as I stopped being afraid the good things started to happen in terms of relationships.

That connects to what you wrote in Fear of Flying about the dangers of a woman looking for a man to complete her: "If we haven't the power to complete ourselves, the search for love becomes the search for self annihilation." Isadora says that her greatest illusion was to imagine that Adrian Goodlove was her double, and here she is in How To Save Your Own Life welcoming Josh as her long lost brother.

Well, in the beginning of an infatuation

you tend to feel that the person is your long lost other half. As the relationship develops you discover you are very different. If it survives, you grow to like and honour the differences. If it doesn't survive the infatuation period, then it just smashes to bits. In *How To Save Your Own Life* I've written about the initial period. The subject of the book is really *how hard it is to leave*, how frightening it is to change your life. As a love story it's barely recorded, it's hinted, suggested, recorded in poems.

Let's go back to how you lost your fears. Isadora's fear of flying was one aspect of her feeling that if she stopped worrying for a moment everything was going to fall apart. How was it that another woman poet's death, Jeannie Morton's, cut through her fear of flying so that she no longer felt she had to worry to keep the plane up?

It's sort of ineffable isn't it. In the book it's not explained and maybe at the time I wrote it I didn't really understand it. I think there comes a point in life — usually tied up with the death of people we love — when you lose the fantasy that you can control everything. I mean we go through our adolescence and twenties thinking we can control absolutely everything and going mad when we can't, and then there comes a point — I think it has to do with the ageing process, losing dear friends, the death of a parent or some irrevocable illness, when you say to yourself, "I will try to make my life as good as I can for myself, but to some extent it's in the lap of the gods." You become much more of an existentialist. It has to do with recognising your own death someday through the death of a friend. The strange thing is it's very liberating. It's like always being afraid of your thirtieth birthday and when you get past it you think, "Oh it's marvellous, why didn't somebody tell me that the worst thing is anticipating it." That's the way I feel about death. Also Jeannie acts out a part of a suicidal wish that Isadora has. She is an aspect of Isadora.

You were quoted as saying that you wanted to show that women needn't be "spinsters or suicides", that they could have both love and work.

I wanted to create a role model that was positive because I think we've had tons of negative ones and retribution fantasies. In the 19th century novels I admire — *Anna Karenina*, *Mme Bovary* — the heroine makes one little stab at independence, rebelling against her husband in the form of an affair. Rebellion against patriarchal society always took the form of a sexual affair because women's sphere of action was so narrow — there's no other place where she can rebel. So Anna goes off with Vronsky and ends up a suicide. In the 20th century you see so many women writers carrying on the same old thing. The woman will always be punished. She doesn't do very much but the punishment is hideous; death, a baby run over, sterilisation, the only way Kate in *Edna O'Brian's Country Girls* trilogy manages to deal with her woman-

hood is by having her organs ripped out. It's not a positive role model, OK? (laughter)

But how positive is Isadora's solution, going from one man to another?

But you see I think that the crux of the book, the message if you want to find one, is not in the erotic epilogue, nor in the poems, but when she goes back to the hotel and writes those notes to herself. Renounce useless guilt. Don't make a cult of suffering. Live in the Now. Always do the things you fear the most. Trust all joy. I won't put down love either because I really think it is very soul expanding to love another person, whether you call it romantic love or whatever. And I don't think human beings were meant to live without other people, although there may be times in one's life when one should quite happily live alone. There are different stages but the point is to lose the fear and to sort of have a risk taking attitude towards life.

Yes, I agree with that, but I think romanticism has been very destructive for women. You have to draw the good things out of it — being close to somebody, intimacy, sexual ecstasy. But we haven't really found a way of expressing those outside the romantic framework.

Yes, but it's such a shame that everything is so fraught for women nowadays. I've seen people come to blows over my books. I've seen myself bitterly denounced as being reactionary.

Isadora says she writes to be loved. Your books seem to arouse real love or real antagonism. Does this upset you?

For much of my life I've written for approval, but I'm sort of moving out of that now. I have certain tasks this year and one is to stop caring so much what people think of me. Am I number one on the best seller list or number five? Were the reviews good or bad? I think all this was given to me as a lesson by God, or the Muse, or whoever you believe in, to teach me a kind of indifference. I mean that indifference in the Zen sense.

Several of the things you have said do suggest a mystical or Zen Buddhist attitude to life. Would you say you have moved towards that ... moved through psychoanalysis?

I'm much more drawn towards religion than I ever thought I would be, and I'm much more drawn towards mysticism than I ever was. Not that I think answers are to be found in meditation, but I would like to cultivate a kind of engaged detachment that the Zen Buddhists talk about. So that one can stand above the stream of life and see the circus of the world without becoming too enraged by the injustices and the excesses, and yet struggling to combat them. That would be a solution for me — not a final solution, but much better than where I've been before. I've had some hard knocks because of the backlash against the success of the first book. And many men are outraged by *How To Save Your Own Life* because it is an instance of a woman

actually changing her life, and doing this awful thing of finding a younger man — a man with no money and a beard. This is practically worse than being a lesbian; men can sort of dig lesbianism, it's a turn on, they think it's very cute and really want to get in bed with the two of you. But they can't deal with the idea that you might want another, younger man — that's really upsetting. But despite all of this I've found myself in a much greater state of calm. I will go to a hotel room in a foreign city and be really depressed because I've had an interview with some hostile son of a bitch, and I'll do breathing and meditation, take a long bath and enjoy the peace. This is new to me — this ability to enjoy the loneliness that isn't lonely.

Whereas Isadora would have masturbated several times and made long distance phone calls.

Yes, however much you draw on your own feelings and experiences in a book, by the time you've written it you've already moved somewhere else.

Did you find it hard to write another book after the success of your first?

Yes, it was ghastly. I knew that no matter what I did next I would get a lot of shit. I knew that if I did a book that was totally different, say a historical novel, everyone would have said, "Oh, why did she give up Isadora, she should have developed her, after all she left her in the bath tub and it wasn't clear which side of the fence she was on." If I wrote a sequel they would all say, "Oh the lazy woman's way out." And if I didn't write a book for eleven years, they would say, "See one shot author, we told you it was one shot." So I gritted my teeth and said, "You're a professional writer, professional writers write a book every couple of years, whether they want to or not. That's your life, how you make your living, so by God you've got to get through number two."

Do you also see writing poetry as a profession?

Poems are divinely inspired! (laughter). Maybe I feel I'm a poet first who happens to write novels. Sometimes I feel that my novels support my poetry habit like somebody being a rock star to support their cocaine. No, I do feel very serious and passionate about writing novels. When you write poetry, you preach to the converted; people who read it are poetry freaks. But when you write a novel you reach the big world, you cause a stir and you really make people reconsider their lives.

You really think that novels can change people's lives?

Oh yes, I do. Well, not directly, but I frequently get letters from women who say, "As a result of reading your book I began to think about my marriage and I've now left my husband." I think that's why a lot of male critics don't like my work.

But your work has been described as a breakthrough for women in that you've

written very explicitly about sexuality. Why do you think it has been so hard for women to write about their own sexuality?

If you sat in on some of the interviews I've been through you'd know — the flack is incredible. I come home sometimes and say, "I'm never going to write another word about sex as long as I live." Anais Nin said that the reason she had eliminated all the stuff about her love life from her published journals was because she had seen what had happened to Violette Leduc, and that a woman who writes about sex is not tolerated. And Boy! it hasn't changed much. Now they are claiming that we are all climbing on the bandwagon to earn royalties because a lot of these books have been successful. There was a piece by Francine de Plessix Grey in the *New York Times* where she said, in the famous old tradition of the woman writer turning on her sisters, that women writers are stuck in the body trap; now they've discovered writing about sexuality, all they can write about is sexuality and it's become boring and . . . I think Francine is a brilliant writer but what she's doing here is internalising male criticism of women and spewing it out against other women.

Didn't you find it very difficult to write about sexuality? All our images of what is erotic have been male defined.

It was terrible. I wrote *Fear of Flying* in a constant state of tremour. I was so scared my hands and feet kept getting cold. I kept thinking, "What are you doing, what are you putting on the page, you nut, you can't publish this." And then I would say, "So you won't publish, but you'll just get it down and then you'll put it in your desk drawer. Unless you see it through to the end you'll never believe in yourself again." I had started so many novels that I hadn't finished — this was one book I was going to finish for myself.

So you were very aware that what you were writing about was taboo?

Definitely. When I was writing the second one, partly as a result of *Fear of Flying*, it had become more acceptable, almost chic. Then I felt a very different kind of pressure — the pressure of knowing that anything I wrote next was going to be hated and nothing was going to be seen for its true value. So at that point I said, "OK I will write this book for 1990, by then people won't be over-reacting."

Many women will react against the way you treat lesbianism in your second book — you present a very negative picture.

Well, the sad fact is that I'm not presenting a picture of lesbianism. The awful thing about writing a novel is that people think you advocate and/or disapprove of everything in the book. I was really doing a send up of that whole period in the Women's Movement in the United States when everyone said, "If you don't try it once whether you like it or not, you're not a good feminist." I think that's absurd and an insult to people who are inclined to be gay, or seriously gay.

But very little has been written about sexuality between women. Your book might be the only account of a lesbian sexual experience that a woman could ever read. Sure you're entitled to say what Isadora felt about it, but why make her lesbian lover the baddy — the one who hides Isadora's love letters from Josh?

She was not being spoofed as a lesbian but as a user, a sort of rich girl who uses writers for her own aggrandisement. You try on different modes in different books and people always try to nail you — saying that's your position.

I would nail you as reaffirming heterosexuality. Given that you're saying we have to change so many things about ourselves, about society, one of the things we have to fight against is the absolute imperative to be heterosexual.

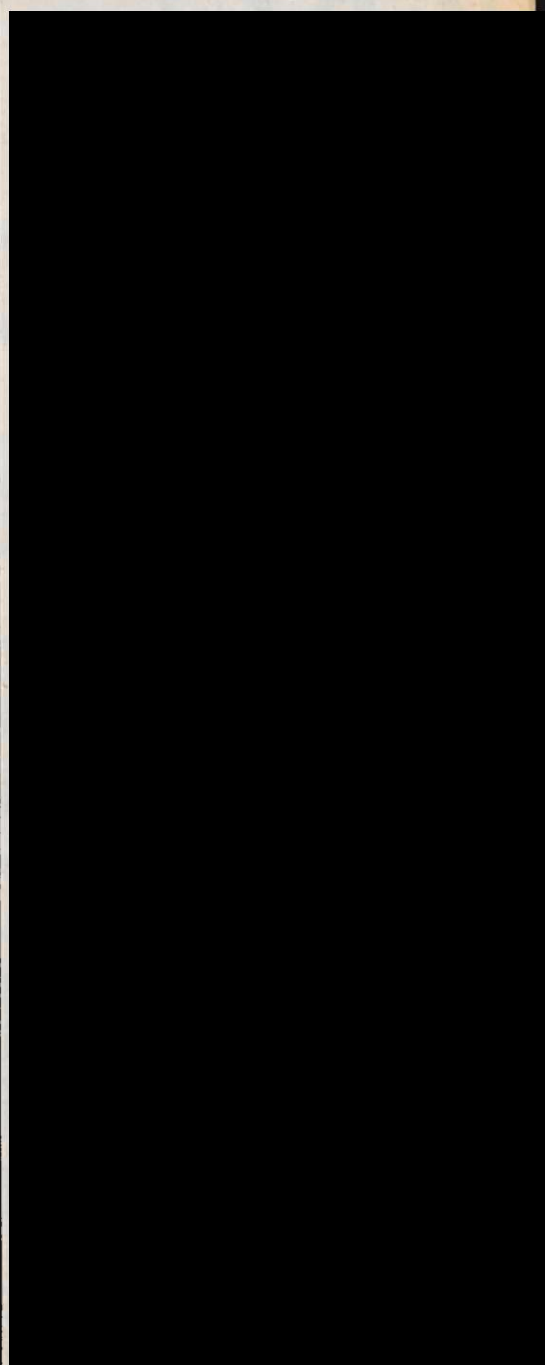
It's unfortunate if my book is seen as an attack on lesbianism. I didn't see it that way. It was a very satirical and broad thing, I mean no-one has ever used a bottle of Dom Perignon to my knowledge. I thought that would tip everyone off that it was just wild parody. I recognise that lesbianism has been a way of independence for many women, of having shelter in the world without seeking it from patriarchy.

Would you say politically that you see men as directly oppressing women? Do you think that male power is what we struggle against?

No, it's patriarchy and it's carried on by women as well as men. Our mothers are often the greatest teachers of patriarchy, and you see women in power who are just as patriarchal as men. It's much more subtle than that. In the early days of the movement we assumed that if you put women in positions that men have held, you would eliminate sexism. But in a misogynous society even women are misogynists.

The few times that women's liberation is mentioned in your books, it's in a kind of satirical way at the end of some sexual exploit. It's very much an individual's attempt to pull herself up by her boot straps. I don't get much awareness that there are lots of other women who are thinking about these things.

Well, I never got a lot of nourishment from the movement. I've always been a person who loved other women and had women as friends, but the first time I ever came intellectually to blows with another woman was after the movement began. There was such incredible pressure. And there was this awful feeling that if you wanted to do your own work, if you said, "I'm sorry, I can't come to the benefit/poetry reading on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday nights, because I'm writing a novel," you were selfish, not contributing enough, too interested in your own career. You had to be out there stuffing envelopes, you had to be doing this and doing that, and what you were best at — writing — was the thing that got lost, there was no time for that. I made a very conscious decision that I had more to give by writing novels.



How To Save Your Own Life was reviewed by Jean Radford in SR 59.

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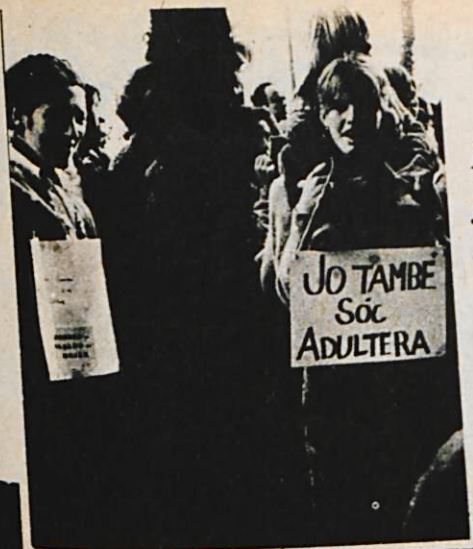
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In Spain the Women's Liberation Movement has flourished since Franco's death a year and a half ago. What are the priorities for feminists there now?

By Anita Bennett and Jill Nicholls, after talking with women from Barcelona and Majorca, and with each other.

(above) "I am also an adulteress." In solidarity with Maria Angeles Munoz (see SR 54)



'We are all criminals'

WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN SPAIN

We are all adulteresses" read the placards on the largest women's liberation demonstration in Spain ever. By their hundreds women took to the streets — in Barcelona, Zaragoza, Madrid, Valencia, Sevilla — to protest the charge of adultery against Maria Angela Munoz. Her husband, Ramon Soto, went to the judge to gain custody of their small child, Yolanda, whom he had abandoned two months after her birth. "A Father Who Wants His Daughter Back" read the male-dominated press. A father supported in his claim by the Spanish state and the Church. In Spain, as elsewhere, women are property, mere breeders of children. Under the Penal Code women can be prosecuted for adultery, for any sexual relations outside marriage. Men can be charged only when they have it off within the four walls of the matrimonial home. And few would be so foolish as to pursue their affairs (*asuntos*) at home.

Spanish prisons are full of women incarcerated for "crimes" such as prostitution and abortion. In fact, one half of the women now in prison are said to be charged with either having had or

performed an illegal abortion. The Pope still feels it his duty to define for women everywhere the meaning of the 'right to life', and the Church in Spain wields considerable influence.

While thousands demonstrate for the release of all political prisoners, for a total amnesty, the burgeoning women's liberation movement is demanding that their sisters too be recognised as political prisoners. One of the most famous women prisoners in Spain, psychoanalyst and author Eva Forest, has recently been released from the women's prison of Yeserias where she was held more than two years without trial and subjected to brutal sexual torture. Lidia Falcon, a feminist lawyer from Barcelona, was arrested with her friend Eva but released in the summer of 1975. The publicity given to Eva's case by the international women's liberation movement was instrumental in her release as well as in the lessening of her torture. The international movement has also contributed considerably to the growth of feminist consciousness inside Spain.



ALAN GROUNDS



Lidia Falcon

Broadcasting Feminism

Women were active in Spanish politics long before the women's movement, but they are only now beginning to organise autonomously, around their own issues. For example, the Communist Party's *Asociacion Democratica de Mujeres* in Madrid has worked since 1970 for the release of their (mainly male) relatives and friends. They have demonstrated, petitioned, published underground bulletins. However, Lidia Falcon, concerned for the forgotten female prisoners, criticised the *Asociacion's* food march at Christmas 1975. "They brought food and placards to the men's prison of Carabanchel, the best known. But they forgot the women political prisoners sitting in Yserias. No one cares about the women, they're not considered to be 'political'! Yet some of the women in Yserias with me were charged with 'terrorism'. Some had tiny children, no exercise, fewer visits. In the Barcelona women's prison the situation is even worse because the place is run by repressed nuns."

The male torturers inside the prisons cannot be totally divorced from the men outside. Brutality, sex warfare is waged against every woman who walks the streets. The degree of oppression often depends on the class into which a woman is born. A friend from a village in Andalucia once said, "I remember when one of the women in the village committed adultery. She was paraded through the village and stoned by all the villagers."

The sexism is deep-rooted. But the most encouraging sign for change is the feminist movement — which has exploded on the scene since the death of Franco in 1975. Before that, any oppositional organisation was underground. Even over the last year and a half the movement has been semi-clandestine. In May/June 1976, 4,000 women gathered for four days in Barcelona for the first national feminist conference, the first public meeting of any kind since Franco's death. Here they gave further impetus to an independent women's movement and elaborated some basic demands — on pay, abortion, contraception.

Some feminist groups want to be legalised, especially those involved with specific campaigns; the Barcelona divorce groups were legalised on May 19. The radical feminist groups feel their goal goes beyond legalisation; they don't feel they could integrate their fight with the 'democracy' available in Spain. If a group is not legitimised, its meetings can be forbidden — "But we go ahead anyway, and don't ask for permission."

Perhaps because women have been so oppressed for the last 40 years, their movement arrives with a greater force and seriousness than in any other European country. "Feminist" is becoming a household word: magazines, newspapers, television and, yes, even men, pay lip service to the women's movement.

In Palma de Majorca, the newly-formed women's groups have both a news column in the island's major newspaper and their own weekly radio programme. "It consists partly of news reports and partly of interviews," explained Leonor Taboada, one of the group. "For instance women talk about their sexual lives from the very beginning — how they lost their virginity, what kind of orgasm they feel. One woman talked about getting an orgasm at last by going off with another man after being married eight years.

The radio station turned the sound down very low — so we wrote it up in the newspaper instead!"

Women of all ages and classes have begun to approach the feminists — they are sick of being treated like cattle. Leonor said with great glee that she and another sister were driving along the main strip on the waterfront when some men accosted them: "I started honking the horn, telling them to go home and teach their fathers to drive a car, to go cover their cocks. They were so surprised they didn't know what to do at first, then they got really angry and started to chase us."

"Things are moving fast in Majorca," she added, "though we have a lot of trouble with the left. We had a conference on women and our bodies in Palma on May 6, and wouldn't let men in because we were showing how to use speculums [*instruments for spreading the vaginal walls while examining the cervix*]. The men were fighting women outside because they couldn't come in. Many women bought speculums and were rushing round the main square that night clacking their speculums!"

"Double Militancy"

One of the most active tendencies in the movement is the *Colectivo*; founded in Barcelona by Lidia Falcon, it now has nationwide coordination, with occasional conferences to work out their line. Although their membership is small, the impact of their ideas has helped shape the new movement. Lidia and a couple of other women from the *Colectivo* work on *Vindicacion Feminista*, a monthly magazine with a circulation of about 30,000. It is not the official journal of the *Colectivo*, who as a whole don't feel represented by it.

Past experience coupled with the present political practice of left groups has convinced many women of the need for a specifically feminist revolution. They, like radical feminists in other countries, view women as a distinct social class and see men as the primary oppressors of women. Most of the women in the *Colectivo* have been Marxists of one sort or another (Lidia was in the Spanish Communist Party — PCE). However, they now view Marxism as totally incapable of bringing about the liberation of women. They concentrate very much on theory, holding small group discussions and writing.

Their experiences in Leninist-type parties, however distorted, have led them to function rather like one themselves. Because they think women constitute a class which must overthrow the patriarchy, they want their own feminist, democratic centralist party. Women who belong to other political parties are not permitted to maintain *doble militancia* (double militancy), that is, dual membership of the *Colectivo* and another organisation, on the grounds that it wouldn't be clear where their "real" loyalties lay — to women or to the men in their left groups. They can have 'double militancy' for a trial period, but then have to choose.

One must be elected into a *Colectivo*. From this and their dogmatic line many problems have arisen. Recently Lidia Falcon, her daughter Regina and Any Estany, who all help publish *Vindicacion*, were expelled from the Barcelona *Colectivo*. This feud was instantly lapped up by the press, anxious to discredit



Rosa Franquet

dona



Neighbourhood women's paper



the movement. Others in the group accused these three of being "elitist, egotistical, dictatorial". The *Colectivo* criticised them on 20 points: one concerned an article which Lidia had published on domestic labour, roughly corresponding to the Wages for Housework position — should she have signed it personally or credited it to the *Colectivo*? Was it the 'correct line'?

A difference in strategy as to how to approach the national elections on June 15, the first held in Spain for 40 years, caused further divisions in the national *Colectivo* network, and in other sections of the women's movement. Lidia believes that women should boycott the elections since participation means acceptance of the "democratic farce" and de facto recognition of the monarchy. She argues that "Women have more to gain from the Republican form of government. Under the Republic, women could vote, own property, have abortions." Women in Catalonia today want to get similar benefits to those they had during the Republic. But some of the *Colectivo* want to put up feminist candidates in the elections. There's also conflict within the movement as to whether or not to vote, and whether to give support to left-wing parties.

Streetlights and Vaginas

Nationally, the women's movement is held together by a coordinating body, the *Coordinadora Estatal*. Locally, there are coordinating networks such as the *Coordinadora de Barcelona*, which has representatives from a number of women's, trade union and neighbourhood organisations. Rosa Franquet, invited by the National Abortion Campaign to the May 14 demonstration against Benyon's Bill, is an active member of the Santa's neighbourhood women's group — a *Vocalia de Mujeres*. During the Franco dictatorship, these neighbourhood committees worked for local reforms, such as better street lights. (Regina Falcon once accused these women of "having street lights instead of vaginas".) Now the neighbourhood groups are becoming more radicalised and feminist, attracting women in left groups and trade unions, and local women who've had no previous contact with the women's movement.

There are too many groups to list — some that have split from the *Colectivo*, like a lesbian group in Valencia, and the Majorca group "Pelvis" who objected to the *Colectivo*'s hard line; and others, like ANCHE in Barcelona, once an open group of about 150 socialist feminists, now split into radical feminists and those on the left. The movement's main concerns are broad political issues and health; groups are always in flux, and will be even more so after the June 15 elections.

Theoretical differences between the groups have very practical consequences. Rosa Franquet, for example, argues for the necessity of a single issue campaign on abortion and contraception. Both are illegal; women with money can get abortions in London, but poorer women have to find other ways. In one recent case a teenage girl, aided by her boyfriend, sought an illegal abortion on the resort island of Ibiza. The female abortionist is reported to have injected hot beer into the woman's uterus, provoking a severe haemorrhage. When the girl and her boyfriend sought medical advice, they were turned away for lack of money

(15,000 pesetas or £125). The girl died four days later. Her boyfriend, the abortionist and even her small child remain in prison for conspiring to abort. Feminists protested, and now the doctor who refused to give treatment is on trial for malpractice.

Given this atrocious situation, for some the priority is to change the law. A group in Madrid for example is working for legal contraceptive clinics. Women in political parties are trying to get their organisations to take up the fight for contraception and abortion — abortion is obviously the more controversial.

The radical feminists tend to leave the hard grind of campaigning for legal change to the "reformists". A self-help collective in Barcelona tries to spread "counter-information" — they assume that contraceptive clinics will come, and want to make sure that women have the right kind of contraception. They do realise that abortion on demand won't come so easily.

The *Colectivo* argue that sex with men is always an act of aggression, and unnecessary because women can have orgasms without penetration. They agree in theory with a woman's right to choose, but put no energy into building a campaign involving all women against the abortion laws.

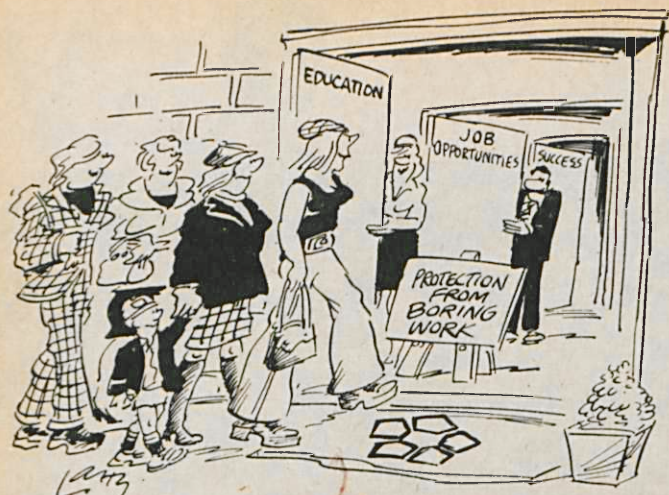
In Barcelona there have been large meetings on the right to divorce, which does not exist under the present civil law. The Communist and Socialist parties, and those to their left, tend to at least mention this issue in their election propaganda. "This is hardly surprising," Rosa Franquet explained; "It is very likely that the government is going to have to give in on divorce, since many of the *progres* (trendies) are campaigning for it. It is an important issue, but not as central as abortion and contraception."

The radical feminists are against marriage and the family, so for them divorce is only part of the problem. "We have to support the campaign for divorce," says Leonor, "but we are trying to open women's minds about what it means to be married."

Splits in the women's liberation movement showed clearly this year on May Day, which happened to coincide with Mothers' Day. May Day, a traditional international trade union celebration, was particularly significant in Spain this year. In Madrid and in the Basque country (*Euzkadi*), demonstrations were brutally repressed by the police. Some feminists in Barcelona argued for joining the main trade union demonstration outside the city, as a separate women's contingent.

Others objected, and instead of joining the massive May Day march, women from the *Colectivo* and from LAMAR ("the sea", a very active radical feminist grouping), took up the issue of Mothers' Day. They held a picket outside the "Maternidad" (maternity) hospital, the biggest in Barcelona. In particular they protested the situation of unmarried mothers. In Spain these women are criminals — many are forced to put their children up for adoption. But the children are not even legal human beings. They are "illegitimate" — without a father they are quite literally not recognised by Church and State. Without a man, a woman is "illegitimate" — that is what the feminists are challenging. □

Soon we hope to publish an article by the women in Palma de Majorca who have their own regular radio programme.



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... that we can no longer continue to sell *Spare Rib* at 30p a copy and we want to explain why we have to raise the cover price. We've always tried to keep the cost of the magazine as low as we can so that as many women as possible can afford to buy it. 30p has been the cover price for the last three years and although we've often been under pressure to raise it, until now we've managed to avoid doing this. We've kept our printing/typesetting costs at less than 10p per copy, and with *Spare Rib* selling at 30p we only get 13½p for each copy sold (the distributors between them get 55% of the cover price) — 10p of this goes on printing. We've cut costs in every way possible — using cheaper paper, changing printers, juggling bills, stopping paying writers and photographers, moving offices. So why can't we continue to do this?

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Obviously inflation has hit us and increased our general running costs: postage, telephone, electricity, transport costs have all doubled.

Wages

Since our last price rise three years ago the cost of living has increased by 70%, but *Spare Rib* wages have remained the same (£4.00 per day). Not only has the real value of our minimal wage dropped, but fares have soared, and with less part-time work around it's harder for women to supplement *Spare Rib* wages. We're desperately short of womanpower on all areas of the magazine — in the last six months four women have left, including two who have been able to work unpaid — and very few women can give the necessary time and commitment to the collective without money to live on.

At the moment our average monthly income is just about the same as our monthly expenditure (around £3200), so there's absolutely no room for the extra money needed both for wages and for promotion to reach new readers.

Our decision to raise the price this month (some of us felt we should give advance warning and raise it next month) has nothing to do with the cost of the extra pages in this Birthday Issue. This was largely covered by support advertising, most of which comes only once a year.

NB The subscription price will stay the same until 1st September (£4.44 p.a.) — so subscribe now, avoid the price increase and support *Spare Rib*.

The EOC gave us a grant of £3772 specifically to produce wall posters for schools and colleges. At least £2000 of this will go on printing, and we haven't had time to do anything about this project yet.

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A day in the Life of...

Spare Rib would like to hear from you
about a day in your life.

Other magazines and papers run columns on "My Week" or "My Day" but the contributors are usually celebrities of sorts. They offer carefully selected slices of their lives guaranteed to inspire envy or to reassure: "She's quite ordinary after all." But basically they rely on voyeurism. Spare Rib is equally noseey, only we want to know, for example, how the woman next door spends her day at work, why the woman at the Social Security office was in tears, how the woman on the bus copes with six kids and when the woman who believes in multiple multiple relationships has time for herself.

But we don't want only to hear the details of your day, we also want to know how you would like your life to *change*. You can offer us practical schemes or the wildest utopian dreams. You can suggest political, legal, sexual, economic, small personal changes - anything that would shape your day according to your wishes.

We decided to start the series with a description of a day shared by millions of women throughout the country. Ann talks about a typical day in her life and the changes she wants are practical and realistic, like a playgroup for her child.

Don't feel constrained by her example; write about a thoroughly untypical day in your life, if you want. Select specific incidents or provide a time diary, just as you choose. Structure the article however you wish, either including suggestions for change within the body of the article, with the description, or adding your ideas for change at the end of the piece. We'd also welcome photographs, drawings, comic strips.

Please keep the article within 1,500 words and send it to "A Day in the Life Of ...", Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1, with an s.a.e. We're afraid we can't pay you for your work.

Ann lives with her husband Terry and their baby Karen on a Midlands council estate. They've been married three years. Their flat is eight floors up in one of the six high rise blocks on the estate, overlooking the nearby car works where Terry works as a drilling machine operator. Ann told Lynn Pearson about a day in her life — a day shared by millions of women.



THURS. AUGUST 21

"What do I do all day? Well, I don't have any set routine except for getting the baby to bed, and getting her meals — apart from that I just do things when I feel like doing them. We've lived here two and a half years — we just wanted a place, nowhere special, and they gave us this one — we'd have taken anywhere. We're going to move soon, though, to another part of the city, where there's a ground floor maisonette with a garden.

"I have breakfast with Karen at about 8.30, and then get out to do the shopping around 9.00 or 9.30. I take Karen with me — I shop each day of the week, as that's the only time I get out. If I bought everything in one big lot, I'd have nothing to buy during the week. I always go to shops where I can take the baby in, I wouldn't leave her outside.

"I get home about 10.30 and put Karen to bed, then I make a cup of coffee, a piece of toast and read the *Mirror*. People here don't seem to want to talk even when you do see them — I think it's because of the flats, people are all shut up; you can be inside your flat, and you don't know what's going on outside. I can't stand the peace and quiet, I'd much rather have a noisy place with people around. You never see anybody from one day to the next, and the baby, she's terrified of other kids, she never sees any.

"When the children get bored, it gets the parents down, so the parents get depressed. Most of the mothers here are more

worried about their kids than themselves, as they are going to be the parents of the future; mothers can get over being depressed. I'd like to see some sort of playschool, but something that the mothers could join in with. There is a playschool at the school across the road, but it's only for one day a week and there's a waiting list for it. The community centre is quite near, but all I use it for is the welfare — I take Karen there. The only other thing they have there is bingo, and I won't go to that. I'd like to see a play area nearer to the community centre, connected with it. And I'd like a library a bit nearer than the one we've got now. But the main thing, wrong with the area is too many flats — I'd like to see more houses built, not flats.

"After I have my coffee I do the housework — ironing, washing, you know. I wouldn't want to go back to working full time; I don't regret giving it up at all. What I did like about it, though, was seeing people — I'm not even seeing much of Terry at the moment because he's working for my brother-in-law at the weekends, on their house, apart from his other job. He's practically living over there at the moment; I don't mind him working on a Saturday morning, because I'm doing something else at that time anyway, but this job . . . Terry's job as a drilling machine operator brings in about £40 a week, and the rent is £8, so I have to manage on £32.

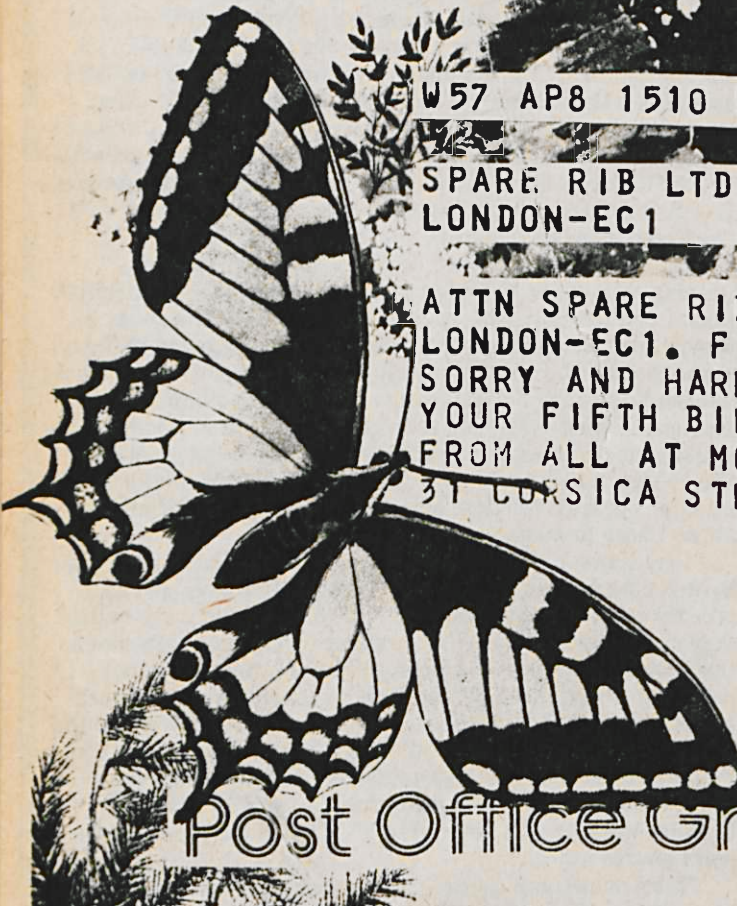
"I get Karen up at 12.30 and give her some dinner while I'm having mine listening to Radio 1. I play with Karen, and then take her out to the play area for half an hour. She plays on the slide and frames — this is fine in the summer, but unpleasant in the winter, when the wind sweeps across between the blocks. I put her to bed about 3.00 and then do some more housework. I have a cigarette and a cup of coffee about 3.30, and watch the racing on TV, if there's any on. I give Karen her tea at 4.30, and then she has a bath. She goes to bed about 6.00. Terry gets home about 6.30, so I get his tea ready for him, and we have tea together when he gets home. The TV's on all the time, but we don't always watch it.

"Terry sometimes goes out in the evenings, but I can't get a baby sitter, and we can't afford a proper baby minder, so I don't go out. I don't mind too much, but I'd like to be able to go out occasionally — it's depressing being in all the time. I miss things we used to do before I had the baby — we used to go for a meal, or a drink, or to a club if there was something special on. We used to go to discos before we got married, but after that, we just stopped. I watch TV in the evenings, and I have a couple of puzzle books I like doing.

"I thought about getting a job at home, as I get so depressed, but if you send off for lists of jobs, all you get is lists of addresses you're supposed to write to. And most of the jobs involve selling — I don't like that, making your friends buy things. I like filling forms in — the moment the tax form comes through the door, I sit down and fill it in. I suppose that's why I like crosswords and puzzles, I can do them while I'm watching the television. I watch TV until the programmes finish, or go to bed a bit before that, about 11.00.

"This area's got shops, a good bus service, pubs, social clubs, plenty of green space — it's all nice except the factory — it's just the women in the flats. I'd like some sort of supervised playschool, but I don't know who would start it, or if the council should build a place for it. During the holidays, it would be good to have somewhere the kids could go in the mornings — it's the 8, 9, 10-year-olds, 12-year-olds who do all the vandalism — they're just bored, they shouldn't be at that age. The council have bought a big area which used to be the factory apprentices' playing fields, but they haven't done anything with it. There's a play area down there, but if something happens, if they fall over and crack their heads, it's too far down — by the time you've got out of the door, got the lift and got down there, it's too late. I don't know how to find out if there's a playschool where we're moving to — but just being out of the flat will make it better, Karen will be able to play outside in the garden. I think kids ought to be able to enjoy themselves while they're young.

"Now it's known, nationwide, and it has been for the last few years, that small children shouldn't be in tower blocks, why aren't they doing something about it? You see the council sending older couples, with maybe one older child, about 17 or 18, to a house with three bedrooms. I know they're doing it so that the ones who've been in longest get out first, but . . ."



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NEWS

WINNIE MANDELA BANISHED

In May this year Winnie Mandela, a member of the Black Parents Association in Soweto, the vast black city near Johannesburg, was banished by the South African Government to a tiny, nameless African suburb which services the white community of Brandfort. Her house, No. 802, is, like all the other houses in this township, without electricity, running water, a bath or a stove. There are no standard sanitation facilities. It is one of the bleakest black townships in the country. Winnie knows no one in the area, nor does she speak the language of the local community, for the black people speak Sotho and the whites Afrikaans, while she is Xhosa-speaking and her second language is English. She does not speak Afrikaans.

Arbitrary action against Winnie by the South African Government has become part of her life since her husband, Nelson Mandela, an African National Congress leader was sentenced to life imprisonment over 15 years ago. Although she is a trained social worker her banning order (first served on her 16 years ago and renewed every five years) forbids her to work professionally. She has supported her family through a variety of jobs ranging from shop-assistant to clerk. She is now forced to leave a position as credit-control clerk with a salary of R350 (£220) a



Winnie Mandela and her daughter Zindzi

month. The South African Minister of Justice, recognising that she will find no work in Brandfort, has offered her a pension of R100 (£70) a month.

Winnie Mandela's persecution by the South African Government — she has been imprisoned repeatedly — has given her a symbolic stature

in the eyes of most South Africans. Her name and her life clearly demonstrate the determination of the people to continue the struggle in spite of the vast machinery of oppression that the state has developed. So it is no wonder that she was imprisoned without trial from August to December last year when

Soweto erupted into the protests which provoked police violence and the deaths of hundreds of school children.

Now the Cilliers Commission, investigating the causes of the riots, is looking for scapegoats. They cannot and will not find that the people in Soweto acted spontaneously and because of legitimate

grievances. They blame agitators, one of whom, they say, is Winnie. In March this year, four witnesses still in detention under the fearsome Terrorism Act (which allows the police to detain suspects or witnesses indefinitely in solitary confinement without access to lawyers or visitors of any kind) alleged that she had held meetings with the students of Soweto prior to the June disturbances and had instigated them to unleash unrest and violence in Soweto.

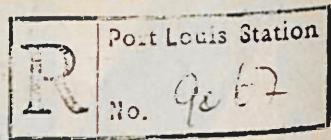
But when Winnie Mandela took advantage of her right to cross-examine these witnesses, three of them admitted that they had been groomed by the police to make the allegations against her. Black leaders believe that her banishment is an act of frustration by a government that would like to imprison her.

"So much to do"

Fatima Meer, founder of the Black Women's Federation, a close friend of Winnie Mandela and herself banned, says, "Black South Africans believe that the Nationalist Government is kept solvent by the heavy economic involvement of Britain and therefore that British pressure could help in forcing the Nationalist Government to return Winnie to her home in Soweto." Fatima appeals urgently to all British people to protest on every level at the treatment of black people in South Africa. She is, as a friend, particularly concerned about Winnie's solitary predicament, away from all her friends and family, unable to leave town.

Recently Mompela Rampele, a 29-year-old doctor who was running a clinic near Kingwilliamstown in the Eastern Cape, was physically forced to leave her work (she was the only doctor for several thousands of people) and taken to a remote "homeland" reserve where she has never lived before.

But wherever these women are they will remain steadfast in the courage and knowledge that they are part of a new spirit moving in South Africa. Sam Moodley lives under house arrest (she has to be home from 6pm to 7am each day and all weekends and public holidays). Her husband is on Robben Island serving five years for his leadership in SASO (the black student organisation). Although trained as a teacher, he is banned from ordinary educational institutions and must have special permission to work with severely handicapped children. Sam says, "With the men in prison the women have to act.



MAURITIUS Pushing Women Out

We received this report from the Women's Liberation Movement in Mauritius, a tiny island in the Indian Ocean, 1400 miles off the African mainland just East of Madagascar. Once settled by the French, then a British colony, it became constitutionally independent in 1968. Its main product is sugar.

As governments all over the world introduce legislation to diminish discrimination against women, the right-wing Mauritian government blatantly passes new discriminatory laws.

On April 12, the Mauritian government passed the Immigration Act and the Deportation Act. According to these Acts, a Mauritian woman has to choose between her right to residence in Mauritius and her right to marry anyone she wants. Since the passing of these sexist laws, Mauritian women married to foreigners have the threat of deportation over their heads; their husbands no longer have the right to stay in Mauritius. They have to apply for a residence permit. The Prime Minister "in his absolute discretion" decides each case.

Unlike Mauritian women,

Mauritian men have the right both to reside in Mauritius and to marry a woman of any nationality.

The same government whose policy was to encourage massive emigration (to solve overpopulation!) now prohibits those women who worked abroad and married foreigners from coming back — for who wants to apply for a permit every year and live with the threat of deportation.

The fact that Mauritius is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1966 and entered into force March 1976) seems not to embarrass them in the least. Neither does the fact that these laws are unconstitutional.

But women in Mauritius will not passively accept so

overt an attack on their status. Since 1971 women have taken part in the general strikes and in May 1975 in massive student strikes.

Women are now participating in the politics of change and women's organisations are taking radical stands. Our movement, which started only in September last year, is mobilising women against these discriminatory laws, as part of the revolutionary struggle against domination and exploitation and for the creation of a socialist world. □

They add: "We would welcome any suggestion and advice which would help us in our fight against such discrimination." Contact The Secretary, Mouvement Liberation Femmes, c/o Tabagie Capucine, Arcades Abbassakoor, Quatre-Bornes, Mauritius.

There is so much to do. But don't think that I am special. Because of my banning order I am not a kind of heroine. All black people in this country are banned from a normal life — restricted, imprisoned." □

Ann Oosthuizen

Ann, who used to live in South Africa, has just spent six weeks there. Because of their banning orders, none of the women mentioned can be quoted in South Africa. If you are reading this issue of Spare Rib there, you are committing a crime. If you want to keep your copy, tear out this page.

PUERTO RICO: Side-effects for Pill Factory Workers

Increased levels of the female hormone estrogen were recently found in both men and women working in a contraceptive pill factory in Puerto Rico.

The report, discussed in an April 1 *Wall St Journal* article, disclosed that five of the male production workers out of 25 men employed, exhibited symptoms of hyperestrogen-

ism (increased levels of estrogen in the blood), such as decreased sex drive and enlarged breasts. Among the women workers studied, 10-18 said they experienced unusual vaginal bleeding, a symptom of hyperestrogenism in women.

The long-term effects of occupational exposure to estrogen are unknown, though the problem has long been recognised. No occupational standards for safe concentrations of estrogen or other hormones in the air have been established by the federal government. □

'Our Bodies' International

Our Bodies, Ourselves, a women's health book that focuses on sexuality and the politics of health care, was first published by a group of women in Boston, USA in 1971, revised four years later. Now women all over Europe are translating and adapting it to suit the particular needs of women in their countries. In May, Norma Svenson and Judy Noisigian from the Boston Women's Health Book Collective came to Europe to meet the book's adaptors and talk with women's health groups. The Collective now produce monthly health notes — collections of articles and speeches from feminist papers, medical journals, etc., all relating to some area of women's health. Jill Nicholls asked them why they were doing these.

Norma: The health packet is a way of rewriting our book — in our last edition we said how quickly the information had gotten out of date — and a way of helping groups involved in giving care on a direct daily basis.

Jill: How many do you send out?

Judy: About 80 to groups abroad and 280 to groups in the States — mainly women-run health centres and self-help groups. Also some individuals through personal contact.

Jill: So is your group mainly an information service to other groups?

Norma: It's become that — in fact we never intended to provide an alternative health service for women or get into routine counselling — we simply organised to gather information, and did it in a loose loose discussion group setting.

Jill: Were you both in at the beginning?

Norma: We've been in six or seven years — some have been eight or nine. We became involved at the time that revisions were being made to the book, and there was talk of a commercial edition — before that it was only in pamphlet form.

Judy: I was interested in doing a nutrition section, and Norma was interested in childbirth at first. It was when we had to sign a contract and become a legal entity, that the group — eleven of us — became closed. This affected our personal relationships — we became a very tight support group, very protective of our space together.

Jill: Why was it you two who came over to Europe?

Norma: A sub-part of our collective is working on a new book on "parenting". The intensity of that involvement has turned their energy away from keeping on top of health materials. This has become our major work, though others in the group help part-time, and come with us on some lecture/workshop trips. So we were the logical people to come to Europe. There's a personal reason too: I'm 45, Judy is 28. My daughter has left home, so I don't have the responsibility for school-age children that most women in the group have, and Judy has no children. So we have more freedom to move around.

Jill: How can you afford to produce the health notes and travel?

Norma: Entirely from the royalties of our book — none of us receives royalties on a personal basis, they come in to what we call a private operating foundation, a special taxed category. That money makes possible the services we provide for other groups; it makes possible collaborative projects with other organisations — we can't give out-right grants; we have to form joint contracts. And it makes our



Collaborating on *Our Bodies, Ourselves*: Angela Phillips (English adaptor), Norma and Judy Jill Rakusen Leonor Taboada (Spanish adaptor), Julia Vellacott (Penguin editor)

salaries possible.

Judy: Everyone who works regularly for the group is on the pay roll, on an hourly rate. The royalties are being used for projects like the Spanish translation in the States (a separate edition is being produced for Spain itself). We wanted it to be available for very little in the States, so we had to take control of its publication and distribution. This is an immense investment, something like 20,000 dollars.

Jill: So your group's in a unique position in the States?

Judy: We do have more money than any other health group. We're part of the National Women's Health Network, the new coalition of groups round the country.

Jill: Has the women's health movement had much influence on conventional medicine?

Norma: It's a force to be reckoned with. There's been pretty extensive coverage of its activities. Individual physicians are sensitive to the existence of our book, and to some extent to the existence of self-help, the use of speculums and the general notion of women taking more responsibility for their own health care. At the level of planning and policy, not so much — not yet.

Jill: Do you think it's easier to set up health groups in the States?

Norma: No question. It's a sad truth we've stumbled on here that the existence of your National Health Service does erode people's initiative — work has to go into trying to change policy-making rather than into direct confrontation with the system. Our alternatives have been created by a system for which most of us have to pay — we can offer

alternatives that are actually cheaper, and offer a challenge to the existing system to which they have to respond.

Judy: Here an alternative women-run service would cost people more. It would be fantastic to see a model within the NHS, a woman-run programme with physicians' backing. One nearly got off the ground last year, after discussions between health activists in Leeds and a physician here in London. With enough concern and pressure from the grass roots you could force the NHS to include such programmes round the country.

Jill: Who have you seen in England?

Norma: A small health group in Oxford held an open meeting. We went to the Marie Stopes Clinic, the Well-Woman Centre, met with the Natural Childbirth Trust and through them with women from AIMS (who work to improve maternity services). We met with about 20 women from Bradford, Manchester and Leeds and of course with Jill Rakusen and Angela Phillips, who are doing the English adaptation.

Jill: How do you feel about the book being adapted into English?

Norma: Reading it now we think it's terrific. Our hope — indeed our requirement — is that in any country, even any region, where there's going to be an edition of the book, a group of local women concerned about health will be involved in expressing for the women in their country what it's like to deal with their system. □

The English version will be available in Penguin early in 1978. The original, updated version is available from Compendium in London and Grass Roots in Manchester at £3.75.

"Kathy": I was four years old when I was brought to England in 1958. I grew up with English girls and boys and shared their views. When I started copying my friends in wearing make-up and styling my hair, my mother used to tell me angrily to wait until she married me off then I could commit any 'scandal' I liked.

You see in the Sikh community a girl must have a clean public record so that her parents can marry her off without trouble and worry.

When an Indian girl is born, there is hardly any rejoicing in the household. But if a boy is born, elaborate celebrations are held and parents are showered with gifts from their acquaintances. This is because when a girl matures her parents have to collect their wealth together in preparation for her dowry which is rich indeed. Yes, the dowry system exists very strongly today, although one may read that it was done away with long ago.

When a girl is married to the man chosen for her (no courting, they meet once but very briefly), she has to live with her in-laws, who obtain full control over her, and thus the girl's parents have lost all claim to their daughter, and probably a great deal of their wealth.

Indian women keep having children to try to have as many boys as possible so that when each mother is older she will have daughters-in-law around her obeying her commands — for that is the law!

There are many unfortunate women who keep giving birth to baby girls. One can think of the woman who has had nine girls. The first two died in infancy, but she now has seven 'losses' for there are seven dowries to be found.

Indian girls whose ways are completely British are terrified by the prospect of arranged marriages. They cannot accept living for the rest of their lives with a man they might see briefly before the wedding takes place.

Academic work has always meant freedom for me, it may be the only way that I can get what I want in my life. So I tried hard at school because I was most happy there — not at home where girls are not allowed out even with their female friends. My headmaster and teachers after a long struggle managed to convince my 'papa' that it was in my best interests to go to a college of further education. Although he said a resigned 'yes' to them, he told me that he would never let me go. He threatened me with this through the examination period and until the

"Six daughters, six dowries to find."

Young Asian women are beginning to organise.
Afshan Begum writes about the group she is in.

As young Asian women living in Britain, we are caught between two conflicting cultures. A small group of us have recently started meeting monthly. We have seven active members living in all parts of Britain, originally from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Ceylon. We meet to discuss the specific forms of oppression we experience, and have produced a bulletin — *The Oppression of South Asian Women* — which will hopefully provide a forum for all Asian women where we can discuss our problems, understand their origins and try to evolve a way to fight them. The first issue had articles arising from individual experiences — extracts are reprinted here.

We believe that, in the end, it is only Asian women themselves who can take up their cause and try to break free from the oppression they have been under far too long. Unless Asian women are willing to take a step and answer our appeal for support, our efforts alone are useless. We have decided that the group will consist mainly of Asian women, but we want to work alongside Western feminist groups. Although as Asian women we suffer a double oppression, there is much that we share as women struggling for liberation.

We want to retain autonomy and develop the best non-oppressive aspects of our culture — for example, the solidarity amongst women which to some extent already exists, but must be organised in a systematic way. We feel strongly that our movement must not be seen as a campaign against our parents or the whole of our culture. We have to look below the surface at both the effects of British imperialism (one of the causes of racism in Britain today) and at the patriarchal traditions of our own societies. Traditionally, women are secluded at home — working from morning till night with no independence or dignity — and restricted from active participation in public life. Some of us are not allowed to go out to work; others who work beside men are in no way given equal status.

We want to emphasise it is not Westernisation we seek — we have yet to decide what true liberation means. We do not imply that the alternative to oppression is adoption of Western standards — we don't see *that* as the answer! This is why we intend to change the temporary title of our bulletin because "oppression" presents only the negative side of our lives.

In our next bulletin we hope to include more analytical articles to help us work out our aims and how to achieve them, as well as articles, poems and stories from women's first hand experience. We also want to include information on the way Asian women are organising and to interview women coping with the dual responsibility of housework and work outside the home.

Our group is still very much in its early stages, so we need more Asian women to join us. We fully realise the importance of maintaining secrecy for anyone wanting it. Friends in the women's movement and in other communities can be invaluable by helping us print and distribute the bulletin, by assisting us financially (POs, not cheques) and by sharing their ideas with us. After all, a harmonious sisterhood in our different struggles is most valuable of all.

day I actually left home.

It is quite revolutionary that I have left to go to college, and any 'scandal' I commit would seriously affect my younger brothers and sisters. My father would clamp down

on their education — their only means to freedom — and my family would be ostracised socially from the Sikh community. How could I commit such an offence when I really do love my parents so much?

Sri Ranjani: I come from a fairly middle class family of Jaffna in the Northern province of Ceylon. Jaffna is an area where caste traditions are tight, the dowry system strong and freedom of women less than in other areas. A son is considered an asset though. A father will invest in his son expecting the profit to come in the form of money orders when he works and a big dowry on the eve of his marriage. It does not stop there. The son brings his wife back to the home to serve him, his father, mother and the others at home. The girl has to fulfill a large list of requisites. Basically all girls are expected to be fair, beautiful, quiet; in short pleasing and obliging.

My family is a large one. Six girls. According to parents and relations, six big burdens; six big stomachs to feed; six big dependent creatures to look after.

I sat for university entrance examinations in a desperate attempt to become a doctor or a dentist, or at least a graduate. It flopped. I tried the next steps — teaching, a government clerical job — but how the hell can you get these jobs without influence along with a big bribe? So what next? Nursing in England at a hospital in Dartford.

The work at the hospital is terrible, and people are not as friendly as I expected.

The residence does give you some independence, but it is quite boring. It's alright for other girls because they can go out with their boyfriends, but for quite a lot of reasons, I can't afford to have one. Mainly, if I am to have a future, I should not be seen around with boys because my name will be spoiled and I won't be able to get married in Ceylon or to a Ceylonese. It's also quite risky to have a Ceylonese student as your boyfriend, because they cheat you and then go round boasting about what they have done, giving your name and telephone number to other friends who are frustrated. I don't say that all boys are bad, but it's difficult to find the good ones, so you might as well keep away from all of them.

Maybe I am independent and eating, dressing, happily sending money home, doing some studying and all that, but I fear that my problems as a Jaffna Tamil woman remain the same or worse. I don't see how it would be possible without marriage. People say some Western women don't believe in marriage. But then they can have boyfriends. Can I do that anywhere in the world? If you come over to

An all-girls dance in London on May 26, organised by the London Women Youth Workers Group, drew over 150 girls and women. "Not all were happy and not all stayed — some took one look and left! But the majority stayed because they were having a good time." Some youth workers report:

Girls who go to youth clubs are fobbed off continually with things they are supposed to like, usually hair-dressing and make-up. Many workers don't recognise that girls are changing and need scope to find out the sort of people they want to be. So several women have been working with girls on their own. When the all-women's band Jam Today offered to play for youth clubs, we decided to get together with them to organise an all-girls event.

When I first proposed the idea to the girls I work with, they were enthusiastic, but almost immediately wondered if the place would be full of lesbians! I had to assure them it would not be a predatory situation. Lesbian paranoia continued, however, though less strongly as the day drew nearer. The group organised with great verve round my suggestion that they cook food for the other girls, which they did very successfully. At one point they spotted a boy sneaking in and asked one of the workers to get rid of him — they were concerned that it was a girls' event.

The lesbian issue came up again when their football coach was seen dancing with another woman. A dialogue about gayness began when the team challenged the coach, demanding to know if she was a "bender"!

Gilly, Caxton House, Islington

When they confronted me "Are you bent?" I was forced to make a quick decision. I knew that denying that I was

England to do nursing, or go to university back home, my society demands still higher dowry as donation for fear of you having slept with someone before marriage.

My maths teacher used to say, while writing a problem on the board, "There's a solution for every problem!"

What is the solution for my problem? □

Please contact us c/o Afshan Begum, 22 Boundary Road, London NW8.



CARO WEBB (BLACK FRIARS PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT)

in fact "bent" as they suggested would put me in a position of lying about my sexuality, though it might put them at ease. By admitting that I'm a lesbian I risked ruining the whole relationship. I acted positively, perhaps without thinking, and said "yes". The reaction I got was completely contrary to what I expected. My relationship with them now is if anything better.

Marj, football coach

Response was varied when I told the girls about the event. Most were surprised that it was only for girls, some said there was no point without boys. At least they were curious! I was disappointed when only three younger ones turned up to go — three older ones met us there and left promising to return, but didn't. Next day they were critical that so many younger children were there.

At the club I run it's not been possible to work with the girls on their own. But the three who stayed had a wonderful time, rushing round, with two of them completely uninhibited about their dancing. "Should have been on Top of the Pops," said one of their mums.

Jay, Godwin Court Club, Camden

As the bop was held where I work, I was very concerned with practical arrangements. Mostly I was anxious about keeping the local boys out, but in fact very few boys tried to come in. The unity and purpose of the women workers was one of the best things about the

What!
no
boys?



ROSE CLARK (BLACK FRIARS PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT)

evening for me.

The girls I work with had mixed reactions. The younger ones were over the moon about the workshop — when Jam Today let them have a go on their instruments — and delighted there were no boys — "We'd never get a go otherwise". Others were more cynical — but none left and all danced right through the disco. This in itself made the evening a success — they'd enjoyed themselves without boys and seen that women had organised the evening, played the music, taken the photos, etc., without the help of men.

Val, Thanet Club, Camden

A highspot of the evening was the workshop. Loads of girls banged away on the drums, got

good sounds out of the saxophone, played the electric piano... Some have said since that they want to learn the drums and guitar seriously.

It was a pity that so many women came along simply to hear Jam Today. It was called a "Girls Bop" — it was about and for girls. It wasn't meant to be a diluted version of the Women's Monthly Event. Some sisters were insensitive to the girls being new to the idea of "female only" and somewhat hampered the introduction we were trying to give. In future we hope that women who want to come will bring younger girls with them. □

Jam Today very much want to play in this kind of situation. Contact them c/o 184 Lansdowne Drive, London E8

Talks-Conferences

Women's Centres

25 June. Conference at Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. The aim is to stimulate more communication between the centres, to discuss problems, ideas. Accommodation available. Details from Femke (01-609 3685) or Camden Women's Centre.

The Suffrage Movement

25 June. Dayschool 10-4 at the London School of Economics, St Clements Building (rm S101A), Houghton St, London WC2. For anyone working on, or interested in aspects of the Suffrage Movement. Details from Jean McCrindle, 124 de Beauvoir Rd, London N1 (01-254 4184).

Feminism & Ireland

26 June. Socialist Feminist conference at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Topics: women's oppression and struggles in the South and the North of Ireland, political situation, importance of the Irish situation for Socialist Feminists. Details from the planning group c/o 13 Malfort Rd, London SE5.

Women And Social Security

30 June. Meeting 7.30 at The Albany, Creek Rd, Deptford. Organised by Women's Voice. Creche provided. Contact Patricia (01-698 2504).

Some Anthropological Aspects Of Prostitution

1 July. Talk 7.30 at the WRR as above. Speaker: Alison Sutherland.

Marxism 77

1-8 July. Series of courses at the Polytechnic of North London, Prince of Wales Rd, London NW5. One of the courses is on Women's Liberation And The Struggle For Socialism. Creche, free accommodation. Registration fee £5. Details from Marxism 77, c/o Socialist Workers Party, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E8 (01-739 2639)

West London

2 July. Women's open meeting 10 at Lancaster Rd Methodist Church Hall, London W11. Workshops on health, women against racism and fascism, consciousness raising, older and younger women, lesbianism, socialism. Designed to bring women in West London together. Details from Jane (01-727 1327). Tickets 75p (50p non-waged).

Pregnancy Testing

2 July. Meeting 10.30-4.30 at Friends Meeting House, Hampton Rd, Redland (Bristol). "We hope that both women who are already testing and those who are interested in setting up a service, will come. Any contributions, papers welcome". Bring packed lunch. Accommodation, creche available, but notify the Women's Centre, 44 The Grove, Bristol 1.

What Is To Be Done?

2 July. Meeting 10.30-6 at NUFTO Hall, Jockey's Fields (off Theobalds Rd), London WC1, to discuss the theoretical questions facing gay socialists. Creche available. Registration 50p. Details from the Conference Collective, 36a Craven Rd, London W2.

Welsh Women

2/3 July. A weekend at the Old Union, Laura Place, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, to lessen feelings of isolation amongst Welsh feminists and to discuss non-feminist battered women's refugees and increase solidarity among National Women's Aid Federation groups. Details from An or Haley, Tyn-yrhelyg, Llanrhystyd, Dyfed



(Nebo 364). Registration £2 (£1.25 claimants).

Radical Feminism

2/3 July. A conference in Edinburgh to work out a theory of radical feminist revolution. For details send a sae to Radical Feminist Theory Group, 160 Fountainbridge, Edinburgh. Also: **LOST:** "the contact sheets to establish a network as discussed at the National Women's Conference in the workshop on 'The need for Revolutionary Feminism to avoid the liberal takeover of the Movement'. Contact above address if you signed the sheet.

Girls Growing Up In Britain

4 July. Discussion 6.30 at the Institute of Race Relations, 247/249 Pentonville Rd, London N1 (01-837 0041), introduced by Sue Sharp (author of *Just Like A Girl*).

Working Class Women In The Women's Liberation Movement

5 July. Meeting 8 at the Big Flame Office, 14a Piccadilly, Manchester. Organised by the Manchester Women & Socialism Group. Details from Nuala Morton, Flat 1, 158 Chorley New Rd, Bolton (Bolton 44539).

Women's Suffrage Movement In South Australia

8 July. Talk 7.30 at the Women's Research & Resources Centre, 158 North Gower St, London NW1. Speaker: Helen Jones. Organised by the Feminist History Group, 18 Lillieshall Rd, London SW4.

The Crisis - Women In The Home And In Employment

9 July. Conference 10 at Birmingham University Union (Council Chambers). "The aim is to try to establish a feminist perspective on the crisis in capitalism, unemployment and the cuts, stressing the particular ways in which women are affected as wives, mothers and paid workers". Organised by a group of non-aligned socialist feminists. Contact Birmingham Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Rd, Balsall Heath, Birmingham (021-449 0684).

Short

Community Childcare

9 July. Workshop 9.30-4 at Gregory House, Brunswick Sq, London WC1. For parents, workers and others involved in community nurseries, and anyone interested in developing the idea of community childcare. Details and application forms from the Children's Community Centre, 123 Dartmouth Park Hill, London N19 (01-272 9383). Cheap lunch available. Registration £1 (60p claimants).

Communist University

9-17 July. At University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. A series of courses of which 3 are of special interest to women: Sexual Politics; Sexuality And Human Nature; Marxism, Feminism And Socialism. The Health course also has several sessions on Women And Health. Creche, food, social events. Register early for free accommodation. Total cost for the week (excl. food) £8. Details from Sally Hibbin, Communist Party, 16 King St, London WC2.

Sex-Role Stereotyping

13-15 July. In Cardiff. Subjects: Women's Liberation Movement as a cultural revolution, analysis of women's identity, self-perception and occupational stereotypes. Organised by the Welsh Section of the British Psychological Society. Contact Oonagh Hartnett or Jill Boden, Dept of Applied Psychology, University of Wales, Llwyn y Grant Rd, Cardiff CF3 7UX.

Older Women In The Movement

19 July. Meeting 8.00 at the Big Flame Office, 14a Piccadilly, Manchester, as above.

The Rise Of British Fascism In The 70s

19 July. Meeting 6.30 at the Institute of Race Relations, as above. Speaker: Maurice Ludmer (editor of *Searchlight*).

Art-Craft

On Show

Until 8 July. Exhibition Mon-Fri 10-6 at the Women's Arts Alliance, as above. Annie Wright works from an autobiographical basis, and Catherine Elwes explores female myths. They have

started to explore how it feels to be a woman - on show and constantly aware of it.

Woman's Shop

Also at the Women's Arts Alliance. There is now a shop, stocking a wide variety of women's literature. They want more women's products. Take your crafts, prints, photos... for display; also books you don't need anymore. Contact

Kay and Linda on Wed or go to the WAA collective meeting on Mon 7.30.

Fun & Music

Women's Monthly Event

25 June. All day meeting at Malden Hall, Herbert St, London NW5, to find out what women want from the event,

who is prepared to put energy in organising them, and if they have been satisfactory so far. Contact the Collective c/o A Woman's Place, 42 Earlham St, London WC2.

Hornsey Women's Social

9 July. 8 at Hornsey Women's Centre, 155 Archway Rd, London N6. Live music by feminist trio. Entrance 50p incl food. Bring a bottle.

Click

Projects-Campaigns

History Of Women's Liberation

"One of our main weaknesses as an organised Movement is that we do not record our activities as they are happening or the effects we experience/observe later." As a result a group has formed to gather together the history of the Movement: "we want not simply to observe it as a series of campaigns, dates and places, but to try and reflect the ways that the Movement actually operates and develops". Details and contributions: History of Women's Liberation, c/o 42 Earlham St, London WC2.

Women & Words

"We are writing a book called *Women & Words*. It is a collection of already published women's poetry from all over the world and will have a critical introduction. If anyone can help with information, advice, we'd be very grateful." Contact Marian Barry, Flat 2,

4 Second Avenue, Hove, Sussex (Brighton 722547).

Women Against Fascism

"The group was formed as a response by feminists to recent National Front activity in London. It aims to increase participation by women in anti-fascist activities... In addition we aim to develop our theoretical understanding of the nature of contemporary fascism and how it affects us as women and workers. We feel this is necessary in order to incorporate an analysis of fascism into the growing body of feminist theory which will lay the basis for directing the attention of the Women's Movement towards an active anti-fascist position." Contact the group c/o South Bank Polytechnic Student Union, Rotary St, London SE1.

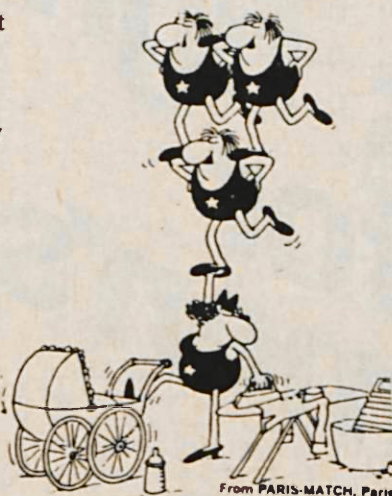
Abortion

SPUC OFF tee-shirts - white background and purple lettering. Small, medium and large available from the Abortion Law Reform Association, 88 Islington High St, London N1. Price £1.99 incl p&p.

Wages For Housework

25 June. Meeting 2.30 at the 'Inkworks', 20 Hepburn Rd,

(off Brigstock Rd), St Pauls, Bristol. Theme: Women Organise To Take What's Ours, introduced by Wilmette Brown (co-founder of Black Women For Wages For House-



work and Wages Due Lesbians, New York). Details from (Bristol 422116).

29 June. Meeting 7.30 at The Women's Centre, 138 Drummond St, London NW1. Who Holds The Baby - motherhood and child custody. Speakers: Wilmette Brown, Ruth Chimo-witz and Yvonne Stringfellow.

Organised by Wages Due Lesbians, London. Details from (01-450 8326).

Women's Aid

28 June. Meeting at East Finchley Neighbourhood Centre. Barnet Tory Council has consistently refused to provide a refuge, saying that battered women are provided for by the Dept of Social Services and the Housing Dept. Barnet Women's Aid consider such provisions inadequate and are launching a campaign for a refuge. Details from Margaret (01-455 1026).

Gays

25 June-2 July. Gay Pride week starting with Gay Pride march on 25 June. Details of the workshops on gays and fascism, trade unions, gay teachers; discos; picnics; and other activities from Gay Switchboard (01-837 7324) or 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1.

Gays Under 21 meet every Sun. afternoon. "It is not a political group, and has no rules, everything that happens in the group is decided by you and the group as a whole." Details from Paul (01-251 2571) or from Carol, 296 Holloway Rd, London N7.

More Fun

Jam Today

13 August. Benefit for Jam Today, the feminist rockband, at Waterloo Action Centre, Bayliss Rd, London SE1. Music discussion, music, and practical workshop, for any women wanting to try out instruments, find out about setting up equipment. Financially the band's situation is pretty desperate: "we've been running at a loss for over a year now and the band is really only viable because its members are prepared to pay to be in it". Funds are needed for a new PA system, to pay off debts and for a record on the new feminist label. "Also we need more feedback from women about questions like what feminist music is, what standards women use, the issue of mixed audiences, problems of working collectively, to what degree the band achieves its aim of demystifying music and encouraging other women to play..." Details from (01-573 1248).

Women's Liberation Music Projects

The scheme was started "out of a need to create space for women in music. We feel that music played, sung and written

today is oppressive and alienating to women... The need for women to have complete control over their music is obvious... train as sound engineers... set up our own recording studio... We are not interested in competing in the commercial market, but in exploring and expressing women's culture, and in breaking down the barriers between performers and listeners. We are planning a series of feminist songbooks and invite women to send in their songs (preferably on cassette). Also we want to set up a music festival for next summer." Contact the Women's Liberation Music Projects c/o Women's Arts Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1.

Plays-Film

Care & Control

A Gay Sweatshop play "based on the experiences of lesbian mothers in their fight for custody of their children... Any woman is suspect in the eyes of the state when she asserts her right to live independently of men. She is seen as a direct challenge to family life and the traditional sexual roles which the courts uphold." 29 June-2 July at Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11. 7 July at Lanchester Poly organised by the Coventry

Women's Group.

13 July at the Open University, Milton Keynes. 14-17 July at Birmingham Arts Lab.

London Film Group

"Although we have been working together since 1972, making feminist films, a pamphlet, two TV programmes and organising a film union, we have found that, due to aesthetic, political and personal differences, we no longer have a basis for working together in this group." The Other Cinema, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2 (01-734 8508) will continue to distribute their films.



5th Birthday Party for all our supporters on FRIDAY 8 JULY
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Won't you drop dead, Bill Benyon,
 Won't you drop dead
 You know you've done us wrong
 We have the babies, Billy,
 We pay the rent
 We'll get you before too long....*

In long loose lines round the float carrying Jam Today, an all-woman rock band, we sang and danced defiantly over Westminster Bridge. It was hot and sunny on May 14, a great day for the National Abortion Campaign's demonstration for a woman's right to choose.

Over 10,000 marched though sadly we were split into two, with a traffic jam between — NAC groups, women's liberation groups, Women's Aid, lesbian banners in front; Labour Party, left groups, student unions and trade unions behind.

A police guard formed in front of Mothercare in Oxford St — afraid we'd attack it for the way it rips off motherhood? "It just shows the measure of their misunderstanding," said one sister, "they think we eat babies." So the chant started up: "Every child a wanted child — we love our children."

At the rally afterwards in Hyde Park, speakers from the Labour Party, the Abortion Law Reform Association, Doctors for a Woman's Choice and other organisations stressed the need to put pressure on MPs and to get more people involved in the campaign.

Pirate Jenny Team Two did sketches from their satire *Bouncing Back With Benyon*, and demonstrators drifted off to argue the issues with strangers in Lyons, who'd seen the badges and banners, or to catch coaches home. □

Jill Nicholls

◀ Marching on May 14 ▼

* to the tune of "Bill Bailey"

New law for battered women

Women are given better legal protection against violent husbands and cohabitants by the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act, which came in on June 1.

Before this, if a woman wanted to apply for an injunction, she had to petition for divorce or judicial separation, if married, or bring an action for assault, if unmarried. Now, she can apply for an injunction by itself, if married or cohabiting. The Act does not cover divorcees or unmarried people who are not cohabiting. The vague definition of cohabitation given by the Act, "living together as husband and wife", is open to different interpretations by the judges.

The Act also gives the judge a discretion, but not a duty, to attach a power of arrest to an injunction, if satisfied that the man has caused "actual bodily harm". Previously, the police had no power to arrest specifically for breach of an injunction and usually refused to use their powers under the criminal law in "domestic disputes".

The National Women's Aid Federation describes the Act as "a step in the right direction" but says "there are many loopholes and it is still unclear how the Act will be implemented by the courts." □ Cynthia Jenkins

MARK RUSHER (IFL)



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

LARC gets going

Over 100 people attended the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign's first national conference in London on May 15.

The main discussion centred round a proposal that LARC should campaign for an end to the free vote for Labour MPs on the abortion issue. ('Abortion on request' is

Labour Party policy, but MPs can vote 'according to conscience'.) Those against the free vote argued that MPs should not have the right to deny women the right to choose; they should be obliged to vote according to party policy. Others argued that while alright in principle, it was tactically incorrect and would alienate potential supporters who believe this to be a moral question and not one for party discipline.

After a heated discussion, the proposal was carried.

LARC's next task is to get abortion discussed at the Labour Party Annual Conference in Brighton. This means sending in enough resolutions to force a debate, and organising a mass lobby and a fringe meeting. □

Mandy Moore

Any Labour Party members interested should contact LARC, c/o Toni Gorton, 73 Albion Rd, London N.16.

Unique Women's Centre in Wales

Jane Hutt from Cardiff reports

"I'm sorry to leave — and I hope to come back before too long. It's really beautiful and peaceful here — I came falling to pieces and am going back quite healthy!"

"Oaklands is a lovely place just to be or do things like walking, milking the goat, cooking and most important learning to ride bicycles!"

"How wonderful to find a women's place and how difficult to leave. Thank you for your creation."

These are just a few of the glowing comments left in the Visitors' Book at Oaklands Women's Centre. Women from all over the world have visited Oaklands in the past two years, since it was licensed, rent-free, by its owner, for use as a Centre where women and children could stay — for retreats, holidays, study groups and small conferences.

Oaklands is in a small village in the Wye Valley, four miles inside Wales. The valley is surrounded by the Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains — so there are beautiful walks, as well as pony-trekking, canoeing and swimming in the river Wye.

The house is large, with space for ten at a time. Any woman can stay for up to two weeks. Bedrooms are equipped with mattresses and blankets. In the winter you need 'wellies' and thick clothes! There is a playroom, but beware — no TV!

Oaklands was opened in September 1975, when Marion and Sue decided to spend a year looking after the Centre. Meryl and Fiona took over from them in September 1976 and are now looking for replacements for next year.

On one of my visits to Oaklands I asked Meryl and Fiona about their life in the Centre:-

What made you come to Oaklands and commit a year of your lives to it?

We first came to Oaklands for a holiday in June 1976, and found it a wonderful place for us to rest and refind ourselves. Sue and Marion were looking for people to take it over. We discussed it with them as we had not yet planned anything for the next year and we felt it was important that a Centre like Oaklands should continue.

Why do you think that Oaklands is important to the Women's Movement?

It can, at its best, provide a good environment for women to meet together and concentrate their time on a specific project, for example, Ealing Common Women's Group came to plan and prepare for an Open Day, and a 'therapy' group come regularly for weekends. It is also important as a refuge for individual women. Although this can sometimes lead to it being used as a cheap bed and breakfast, it seems to be a valid function

What is an average day at Oaklands?

As the Centre is run at the moment, we have quite a few chores to do each morning and evening — feeding hens, the lamb, dog and cat. We have learnt a lot about animal care and gardening, but it doesn't require an interest in these things to run the Centre.

Breakfast usually runs on 'till midday — partly because women talk to each other in the kitchen and partly because of the old fashioned AGA which has to be stoked morning and night and takes ten minutes to boil a kettle!

Afternoons — if it is sunny, we will often go out for walks in the hills — or there's always books and an armchair in front of the fire in the winter!

Housework is usually done on a communal basis — the load only tends to fall on us when we're getting the house straight before a group arrives.

We all eat together in the evening, we always cook the first night when a group arrives and then they take it in turns. We eat vegetarian, partly



because of the cost. In the winter, wood has to be chopped and fires made and we all take a hand in this.

In the evenings, 'sorties' are usually made to one of the local pubs!

How do you survive financially?

The house is licensed to us rent-free and the charges of £1.50 a night including food, just about cover running costs — but this leaves no allowance for repairs and maintenance — for these we rely on extra donations from women who can afford it and on 'Benefit' socials (fancy giving one for Oaklands?). Our personal

income at the moment is from Social Security, though Meryl had a job when we first came here. We're not paid for looking after the house, but we do get free board and lodging.

How do you get supplies for the house?

The big problem is the need for a car! We survived for two months without one. It was very difficult and would be impossible at a busier time of the year. At the moment we have our own vehicle and pay for all our own petrol, but hopefully, if funds are raised at Benefits a house car could

be purchased at some point. We bulk-buy our supplies from neighbouring towns, about once a fortnight for vegetables and household goods, and every two months for wholefoods and beans, grains etc. We also buy organically grown veg. locally and get untreated milk from the farm.

Are you accepted in the village?

We provide a free babysitting service for women in the village, and through the play-group which ran from Oaklands last year, we have got to know others. There does seem to be a potential interest in feminism and we hope to develop this a bit more by setting up a book-stall in local markets. As far as personal friendships go, we've made a few, though it takes a long time to get to know local people.

Who uses Oaklands?

From September 1975 to August 1976 there were about 300 visitors. We've been here since September and we've had nearly 300 ourselves! We've had many women's groups — Newcastle-under-Lyme, Doncaster, Sheffield, Whitechapel, Sydenham, the Women's Report Collective, Wires Collective — as well as individual women, mums, kids, social services referrals. We've also had visits from abroad.

Although the majority are involved in the movement and have heard of Oaklands through women's centres and groups, there are quite a number who haven't been involved, and usually everyone gets on well!

How would you like Oaklands to develop?

There is emerging now more of a collective responsibility for Oaklands. We feel this is very important as it means it's not just us who have all the responsibilities, and there are other women to share the loads and the decisions — about how to publicise Oaklands, how to decide on priorities about who uses it, etc.

For anyone interested in discussing Oaklands and its future, we have set aside the weekend of July 8-10. Let us know if you'd like to come to that, or to take over from us in September. □

Oaklands Women's Centre, Glasbury-on-Wye, via Hereford, Powys. (049-74 275). £1.50 a day for women (including food); 50p a day for children under 11 (babies free).

ALWAYS BOOK — giving two alternative dates if possible, and allowing at least a week to reply by post (enclose s.a.e. please) or phone. (If you would like to publicise Oaklands send for posters and leaflets.)



Outdoor workshop

Scottish Liberation

The Scottish Women's Liberation conference was held in Aberdeen on May 21/22, just seven weeks after the "national" conference in London (SR 58). Many Scottish sisters feel angry about the Southern domination of the movement, which makes them feel cut-off and put-down. And some are questioning the whole idea of conferences. Lorna Mitchell from Edinburgh reports:

The Scottish Conference was not the high point of the year. It was too soon after the London conference. Everyone was pissed-off and disillusioned with conferences after London. When I say everyone, I mean a lot of people in Edinburgh. Not so long ago 15 of us took a shattering all-night mini-bus ride all the way to London. Most of us were too tired to enjoy it, many of us were freaked out by it. It was so huge. We hadn't had time to forget it. In spite of this, eight of us managed to find our way up to Aberdeen to make up the hundred odd who attended.

We enjoyed the sunshine. We enjoyed a little change. But we felt dissatisfied with the conference because it was a conference. What was wrong with it? For the Edinburgh women it seemed to mirror what is wrong with the movement in Edinburgh.

1 There were no raging, crazy, aggressive fanatics, so there was no controversy, no fireworks.

2 Everyone is very nice and we don't really want to fight each other. We are afraid we will just end up destroying ourselves.

3 We are so unassertive. I went to a workshop on aggression which was the most silent, inhibited, unaggressive workshop I have ever been to.

4 Every workshop I heard about petered out.

5 Summer apathy fell on us. We sat out on the grass and slept in the sunshine. We dreamed of being out on the hills having a fabulous holiday in a country cottage.

6 None of us belonged to sects, or power-blocks or fifth columns, we were all isolated

individuals, stuck in the warm pits of already established friendship groups.

7 There is no new cause to fight for or against. Everything's been done before, somewhere else. Separatism, socialism, radical feminism, life-styling, evangelizing. Who cares? The revolution's no nearer than it was five years ago. We still care in our heads. We still hate the system. But we're powerless. Our energies are consumed with our daily struggle to survive, our longing for better things that never happen. In spite of the old slogan, there is still a split between the political and the personal.

For us at Aberdeen it was: the political — spending money to go and say and hear the same old things at workshops; the personal — staying in a flat and getting pissed and stoned together, getting away from personal hassles back home. We are in the same quandary about Scottish conferences as we are about British conferences. Because they're too non-specific, they fall between whatever stools there are. Everyone at Aberdeen felt that something has to be done about conferences. The species is in danger of dying out unless something drastic is done. We decided to have a conference about it, to decide what to do about conferences. I am in favour of having:

1 an in-depth, hard work type conference, grappling with specified issues, discussed beforehand in our groups;

2 an arts' festival — writing, painting, music.

In both cases some work and thought beforehand by every-

one so that communication occurs between people who haven't communicated before. With the possibility of ideas and action being generated. What a dream!

There is no reason why a Scottish conference can't be a bombshell. The only thing holding us back is our lack of self-confidence. I find myself reluctant to be negative about our conferences in the face of *Spare Rib's* English readership. I feel defensive. The national inferiority complex hangs over us like a Celtic mist. It affects everyone in the movement here, most of all the Scots. We hang back passively. We are too modest. We grumble quietly. We don't display ourselves. The same struggles go on inside us that go on openly in London. There are so many people there. They make a bigger noise.

My favourite quote from the London conference: "Someone would have to be a dedicated feminist to travel all the way up to Edinburgh for a conference." We travel to London, to Manchester, to Birmingham, everywhere. Yet we still can't believe in our dedication. What we need is a culture, right here where we're at: an image of ourselves to believe in, to say "we exist and we are strong". We know our arses from our elbows. All we need to do is wipe the shit from our arses and "get right intae them" with our elbows. Bagpipers used to lead armies and strike terror into the enemy. If we started blowing our own pipes, we could find ourselves at the head of the struggle. □

Picket Jaeger's!

400 women at the Laird Portch plant in East Kilbride, a 30 year old new town not far from Glasgow, have been on strike for equal pay since April 26.

Laird Portch is part of the Jaeger clothing group, itself controlled by the Coates-Paton multinational textile giant. Early in May, 150 women at a Jaeger factory in Kilmarnock struck in support. Around Glasgow, solidarity has been organised by the women's movement and by left groups, particularly the Socialist Workers Party, who have taken it up in a big way, picketing Jaeger shops, organising meetings and making collections. A small delegation from Laird Portch has visited various factories where women have recently been on strike.

But the union concerned, the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers, is not giving official support, though the local official is helpful. Their rules state that before a strike can be made official, a two thirds majority of the workforce must be balloted while work is still going on. Apparently the strike decision then has to be agreed by the Executive board of the union, which meets quarterly. But the Laird Portch women had to move fast to stop management shifting stock to prepare for a long dispute.

The dispute dates back to December 1975, when the Equal Pay Act first came in. Despite long negotiations and a new grading scheme, skilled women clothing machinists, cutters and inspectors still earn £10 a week less than a few unskilled men. Equal pay for these women would just be a start. □

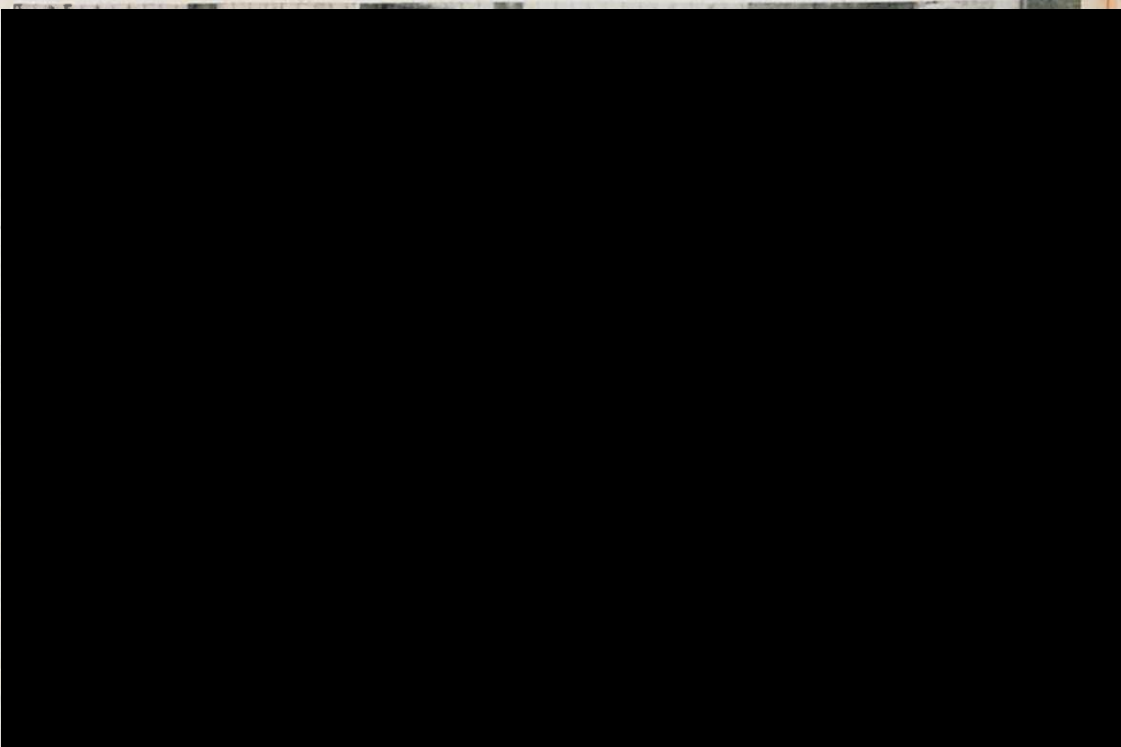
STOP PRESS:

The strike is over for now — the company has agreed to negotiate regradings

Success Story

The Central Arbitration Committee announced in May that an equal pay agreement between ASTMS, ACTS (clerical workers) and Metal Box Ltd can now be implemented and backdated to January 1977. (It was previously blocked by the Department of Employment.)

409 women and 124 men in eight Metal Box factories will get an average increase



Jayaben Desai (left), treasurer of the Grunwick Strike Committee (see SR 59) is accused of assault by Malcolm Alden (right), one of the managers. His only witness is George Ward, the managing director. The police have added the charge of threatening behaviour. Jayaben Desai is 4 ft 10 inches tall.

Shortly after being charged at Willesden police station, she returned to the picket line. Alden stands on the other side of the gate which is reported to have separated them and been shut at the time of the alleged assault.

Cardiographers Make a Stand

Women aren't capable of representing themselves — and certainly not capable of representing men. I don't want a woman representing me. They're not only physically different from men, but mentally inferior.

This is the kind of remark Graham Smith makes, according to seven women cardiographers in the ECG department at Guy's Hospital, London, where Smith is union group secretary for ASTMS (Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff). Sue Sharpe talked to the women involved.

Smith's remarks were addressed to a union meeting on April 25 where Janet McGuire, a cardiographer, was standing for the position of hospital representative. She was the best candidate, having several years active union experience, but the

mainly male meeting elected a man with only seven months' membership. They also took this opportunity to vote Janet and another cardiographer, Pauline Shelley, off the committee.

This was the public outcome of about nine months of undercurrents. The cardiographers had previously sent a joint letter protesting about Smith to their union group — "We feel that this attitude is totally unacceptable in a trade union when trade unions are supposed to fight discrimination against women. In the health service where 70% of the staff are women, it is essential that women are recruited to the union and take positions inside it. We think it is deplorable that the secretary of the Guy's hospital group shows such open

hostility to women members. His attitude is in flagrant contradiction to our union's policy and harmful to building union solidarity."

The ASTMS group at Guys consists mainly of medical school employees. Jan King said, "It was like a club — the men resented being disturbed, they all knew each other, nothing went on at all before this." Elise and Jackie said: "They're doing everything they can to make us feel inferior... as cardiographers we are unqualified workers and this aspect rankles them... whatever we suggest, they vote against. Now they don't even listen."

They got no support to set up a nursery for staff and patients. The attitude to a nursery was — go and organise it yourselves; and they've been doing just that, with petitions and other unions' support. Jan King notes that now the scheme is gaining ground, their union want to take the credit.

Cardiography is responsible work that allows little mobility for further training or promotion. It is traditionally women's work and very low-paid, — "even the porters get more than us". They get only £1,695 basic (plus London weighting and £6 supplement).

They act very much as a group: "We're lucky because

A Meeting of Small Capitalists

The Tory Party Women's Conference was held in London's Central Hall on May 24. Anny Brackx went along to find out what the Tory Party has in mind for us — and what role women play within it.



It was my first Tory Party Women's Conference, and quite an eye-opener: the Tory women didn't look as if they were opening a fete; on the contrary, the few over-dressed and over-made-up stood out, as did the hats, the lack of which was striking. The queue outside Central Hall looked only marginally different from one outside a bingo hall, and there was the same rush for strategic seating.

The hall filled quickly — 2000 it apparently holds. They were middle aged mainly, and hardly any men, except for the

celebrities (MPs and shadow this and that) on the platform near the organ.

After an embarrassing

we're a group of women — if you're a woman on your own you can't do anything... they've tried to pick on Janet because she speaks up a lot. We have to point out that it is all of us, and it's for all women." Jan King thinks Smith and the other men feel threatened "because Janet knows her stuff. People come to Janet McGuire for advice."

What will happen next? Although they have successfully asked their union branch (S.E. London, of which Guy's is one group) to carry out a formal investigation,

Janet says, "Even if we get rid of Smith they'll put someone else in his place who won't be so open about what he thinks and so will be harder to act against."

They have set up a women's caucus to discuss action and want to involve women from other hospitals. To publicise the situation they plan a rally to bring this and other women's issues to the attention of ASTMS members. Janet says "This will show that women are capable of doing these sorts of things and fighting these attitudes." □

National Anthem the chair (wo)man explained the new format of the conference and hoped that we all would be able "to celebrate Jubilee year with a return to sanity and a Conservative government."

Of the 80 motions only three were discussed, including an emergency motion calling for more financial and moral support for the police, so as to quell current unrest. The motion was carried unanimously and William White-law's "it would be a black day in the history of the country if the police were given the right to strike" met with deeply felt approval. But what was different about this year's conference was that most of the two days were devoted to the presentation and discussion of papers based on research and surveys conducted by local Women's Advisory Committees. In the words of Baroness Young (Vice-Chair-(wo)man of the Party Organisation): "We must make ourselves more professional in the techniques of politics... Instead of discussing what we think the electorate thinks, we must use research, so that we know what the electorate thinks. We must also see that this information reaches the right people..." This is the real use, she claims, of the women's organisations: to form a link between the electorate and the government.

The theme of women as undercover agents for the party cropped up again when the paper on Women In Industry was discussed. The survey had been conducted in the East Midlands and shown that "over 38% of the women interviewed were trade union members, but 91% never attended branch meetings."

Stop the Jubilee

38 women programme assistants at Thames TV (so-called Girl Fridays, or "dogs-bodies" by the management) nearly did just that — by wrecking ITV's live coverage of the Jubilee Day procession and the Queen's river trip plus the all-important advertising that goes with it.

The dispute over their demand for extra pay for extra work on a new method of

Alison Wilson, who presented the paper, reminded us that women usually have two jobs: in the home and at work, and that it might therefore be advisable to have union meetings during office hours.

James Prior, Shadow Minister For Employment, agreed and emphasised how shocked he was by these figures. He urged women to get involved in their unions because they are "more sensible, more down to earth than men".

However James Prior is no feminist; he is a capitalist, who exploits women and men on his factory-farm, in the interests of Unilever. Nor is Lady Howe, Vice-Chair (wo)man of the Equal Opportunities Commission (see EOC 10) a feminist: "We reject nut-feminism; gut feminism is what this country needs". Gut-feminism apparently is related to common sense, not being an extremist, and being a member of the Conservative Party.

The paper on The Problems Of Small Businesses, and the concern expressed by all, that the Labour Party is against private enterprise, solved my initial confusion about what kind of audience this was: indeed the grassroots of the Conservative Party are grocers; and they are being deluded by a leadership who tells them that by encouraging small businesses, unemployment is going to decrease — no mention of multi-nationals, even though all on the platform have shares in them. Margaret Thatcher, who was the last party attraction, confirmed that "at heart we are a nation of small capitalists". Yet she felt it important to stress that the Conservative Party had nothing to do with the National Front (who also push small businesses, in their attack on "Bolshevist Jewish Big Business"). "We have no wreckers" said Thatcher; "the policies we are putting forward are common sense policies for common sense people." □

video editing is backed by their union — the Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians — despite Thames' threat to lay off 400 technicians if the women aren't working normally by the end of Jubilee week.

The women have stood firm for three weeks, and the first show to be hit was Rock Follies which was half way through its second series. Thames say they'll rerun the whole series again in the autumn — which might give us time to get a Watch Out review together! □

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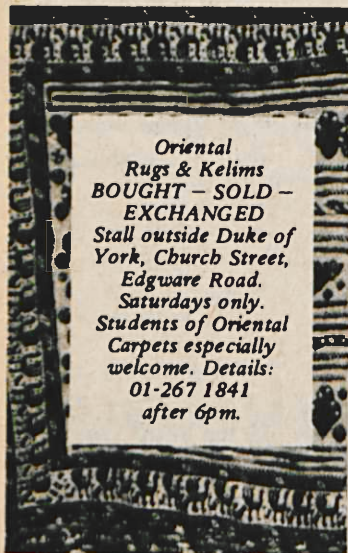
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When my daughter Ruth was three, we left her father. Shortly afterwards I (Elisabeth) became a lesbian. She is now 11, and I am 36. Over those eight years, my lesbianism has been the crucial factor in my development, and it is partly through my relationship with my daughter that I have felt impelled to trace its changes. She was being slowly and irresistibly drawn into society's normalizing processes of school and media and ubiquitous family life: how was I to present myself to her? I had to tell her I was a lesbian from the start, in order to prepare her for possible custody cases; once made explicit, it became an important part of many of our conversations. In March this year we taped one of them. Three distinct phases of my lesbianism seemed to emerge, as we discussed her current opinions on our life together.

Elisabeth: Do you think the friends who come here a lot, or the friends who have been away on holiday with us, are completely oblivious to the fact that Constance and I are lesbians?

Ruth: Well, bloody hell, they don't even know the meaning of it. Their parents don't tell them.

Elisabeth: But there was a phase when all your friends came here when they kept on saying, "Well, who sleeps here, and who sleeps there?" And you said it was very embarrassing for you.

Ruth: Mm. Probably.

Elisabeth: And you said you used to pretend we slept in different rooms.

Ruth: Well, I was younger then. Anyway, you do — I mean, you try going through it!

Elisabeth: Yes, I know, I appreciate that

Ruth: Anyway, I bet you there's loads of really mean girls at my school and if they knew, they'd make life a misery for me. They really would. They'd single me out I don't think any of my friends would probably speak to me. It's just like that.

There is no 'deviant' mother, whether she is single, feminist (heterosexual or homosexual) or whatever her abnormality in society's eyes, who is not hung about by fear of her child's isolation at school. Obviously I was haunted by that, and still am, though to a much lesser extent. How did I deal with this problem early on in my lesbianism, and what explanations and consolations did I offer my daughter?

In 1968 lesbianism was hardly taken up either in the Gay Rights Movement or in the Women's Movement. A major issue then, for homosexuals, was claiming equal rights with heterosexuals to set up as a couple. I believed in toleration, everyone being different, living and let live. I probably gave Ruth to understand that everyone tried to live with someone they loved, and lesbians had this right too. So from her third year on, I explained about the loving couple, sexualising their lives together, using this as the argument to persuade my daughter

of both the authenticity of my relationship with the woman I lived with, and, by implication, my continued right to be her mother (who just 'happened' to be gay — but was otherwise 'normal').

Ruth: I used to feel tense because I used to think, "I'm inferior." I really used to think, "I'm inferior", because, when you're younger, you just think, well all families are like this, it's just normal. But when I was about eight, I found out that it wasn't normal, and people were always making jokes about things they don't know about, they just — they were always making jokes about it, and I didn't know what to do, and I got very upset.

Elisabeth: You don't mean that you thought our family was normal?

Ruth: No well, at first, when I was younger, when I was about five, I thought this was just normal, well obviously — that everybody's like this, but then, I saw the other families in the road and they'd all got mums and dads, and it was later on that I realised. And then I felt very inferior.

From three to eight years, it seems Ruth had a concept of normality which included homosexuality — in a family context. It was definitely the family nature of our set-up which convinced and reassured her, and presumably me, that we were right to claim a place in society. However at eight she began to find herself exposed to a barrage of anti-gay propaganda which made her have strong doubts. She was encountering primary school socialisation ("queers", "homos", and the predictably conservative and sexist curriculum), but I was undergoing changes too. The relationship I had been presenting as 'family' (with all the implicit infrastructure of permanence and fidelity) was coming to an end. I was finding myself more confident now as a lesbian, and well into the custody of my child. This confidence, encouraged as it was by the liberal sexual politics of the early seventies, gave me the impulse to explore the possibilities of sexual attraction. I had experienced it as a girl but subsequently had repressed it firmly. However, being sexually attracted and attractive to other women had become, by then, an affirmation of my lesbian nature. It was, as it were, how I knew I was one. How was I to experiment sexually, and simultaneously present the 'family' face to my child and the ever-threatening custody court?

At first I tried affairs, which I had to be deceitful about, wanting to preserve

Changing with my daughter

A lesbian discovers with her daughter that politics start at home

the couple relationship, because we were close. And also I wanted to give my child 'security'. But the main deception, of course, was not wanting to confront myself with what was actually changing — my lesbian identity.

I didn't feel happy with this state of things — I soon experienced a strong attraction for another woman with whom I simply could not have a rushed, deceitful and sexist relationship. It seemed as if my unquestioning belief in family life for children, and monogamous, romantic, long-term relationships for adults, were still at this stage fundamental. My pull towards women I really suspected to be philandering — likely to harm both my child and my inner 'good' self. So Constance and I set up house together and this new ideally monogamous relationship replaced the former, and my child made the transition without much difficulty. She must have seen life in terms of serial monogamy as indeed I did. But the heterosexual world still didn't approve — try as we might to live by its rules, copy the family structure, and be as inoffensive as possible, heterosexual propaganda continued to tell her, in every possible way, that her family was abnormal, and inferior.

Daily my child was coming home from school more aggressively — she wanted to know why I couldn't really try to be heterosexual. She said she thought, if I was a good mother, I'd make the effort. Finally, goaded beyond endurance, I began to attack her sense of the normal stable heterosexual family. It was this phase of confrontation with her that gradually forced me to formulate my own criticisms of society's norms in this respect.

Elisabeth: What we were trying to get over was that there are no smooth happy normal families...



Ruth: Yes, like you see on the adverts, with everyone smiling.

Elisabeth: . . . that the adults have a lot of sexual problems.

Ruth: Well, I'm beginning to understand that. I mean it's so obvious, once you've explained something. Like say, when someone tells you a word, you start to see it all over the place; well, you explained that to me, and now I see it happening.

Elisabeth: That was quite exciting, when you accepted that from me. Because up till then I'd felt pressurised to present this family as very normal, but I also wanted you to realise that Constance and I and all adults, had a lot of problems which we were working out, that we weren't fully developed.

While she was eight, nine and ten, she often pressurised me to defend my homosexuality. At first I just felt a growing anger that heterosexual adults seemed to play at a conspiracy of happy families — exchanging information about distress only between adults, with children never getting access to the facts. It was difficult for me to break the treaty of silence which adults have about their familial problems — after all, my friends had told

me in confidence of their anxieties — their own children and husbands were often kept in ignorance. Children didn't know they were illegitimate, husbands didn't know their wives were unfaithful — like most adults, I was a repository of a heap of secret information which I desperately now needed to present to my child in order to argue out with her this image of happy heterosexual family life. I told her these confidences. She was amazed.

Ruth: . . . they don't present it to the children, so the children aren't going to know that anything happens like that; they think, "Oh, you fall in love and it's perfect" you know. Happy ever after. Because they don't see anything like that. They just watch the telly and go to bed. I mean they never see anybody with problems coming in.

I had to examine my own dependency on the concept of family, and all related ideas. But I couldn't analyse this heterosexual myth without exposing my own homosexual exploitation of it. At the same time I was becoming gradually more interested in the Women's Movement. Lesbianism, by now, was a feminist issue,

but as yet I saw myself predominantly as gay, not as feminist. I had also come out as gay at work (teaching), where a sizeable group of men and women were homosexual. This was 1972–4, gay club time. I wanted to spend all my time experiencing new strengths of being 'openly' homosexual — at that time this meant parties, a few marches, and a bit of caucussing in the Women's Movement. Our house began to fill with gay people and my daughter's experience of them was mainly, I suppose, of people with 'personal' problems. Indeed, we were all now in a stage of realising what difficulties we were having with monogamy — for at this time, as in the heterosexual world, falling in and out of love seemed an unchangeable 'fact of life'. All we could do about the attendant agonies was to support each other. I was still only seeing 'problems' in terms of 'feelings' — and these feelings in terms of private relationships. I had not yet started to consider how these feelings were related to the type of society we are living in; in other words, that our problems had a political basis. I wanted my child to see adults as people who hadn't worked these out, and not as completed stable people.

Elisabeth: I don't want you to get the idea that lesbians are always having lots of problems, I feel very trapped whichever way!

Ruth: No, what I'm trying to point out is that you're open to me about all the problems that are going on; but there's probably just as much problems with all the other people in the street. I mean they don't present it to their children. Well, obviously, there's more problems for lesbians because they're oppressed.

In mid-1975 she was ten, I began to feel seriously mentally ill. I had 'fallen in love' yet again and this time I felt something was very wrong — the extent of my obsession conflicted with my determination to preserve the relationship I was in. Indeed, I just could no longer accept the idea of dispensability in terms of relationships; to continually cast off one for another. Torn between my powerful feelings for both people, I collapsed into a breakdown. My child observed — all was exposed to her: I was unable to hide my own contradictions any longer, she saw I could not be monogamous.

Lying ill in bed, thrown back on depths of despair and horror, I first heard myself utter the word 'struggle'. It came, as it were, out of the black, and as my daughter says — once you hear a word, you see it everywhere. At last I knew it wasn't just my personal struggle — the whole thing had to change. When on earth was I going to get the strength? I could now see that just resolving the issue of gay or straight was not going to be the basis for advance.

I struggled to recover — I was determined never to fall in love again. It was terrible for all the people involved. I was

confronted with a mess which disgusted me. The woman who lived with me stayed with me and supported me. I had to have help — but I had at last begun to understand the political basis of what had been happening to me. While I had been for many years politically on the left, like most people I had not seen politics as relevant to personal life, families and relationships. The nature of the help I now needed was not therapy, but theory.

I began to apply a socialist analysis to my sexual situation and started to see how capitalism generates, and thrives on the oppression of certain groups in society (like women, blacks and gays), as well as on the exploitation of workers. Meanwhile I was in a new job, still teaching, and I aligned myself to a small group of socialist colleagues. These men and women certainly did not regard sexuality and sexism as side issues — I was lucky. Working together in this group on common struggles, I developed a concept of oppression which extended beyond the field of gay rights: my development was towards the revolutionary Left and into the Women's Movement — how to combine them? The third phase of my lesbianism had begun.

My socialism took on its particular relevance with the formation of a group of lesbian socialist feminists last year, who were all at that time concerned to find a relationship between their commitments to the Left and to the Women's Movement. Some of us began to work out the connection between our personal and political lives, and we became particularly interested in the relationships between capitalism, monogamy, individualism and romance.

Meanwhile my daughter and I continued to discuss my right to be a lesbian, and by now I was trying to get across to her a socialist perspective on oppression, linking various struggles.

Ruth: When they crack jokes about gay people, I always say, "Oh, that's stupid." And they normally agree with me and they say yes, yes. I mean, but I don't say, "Well, my Mum is gay. So don't say that." I just say, "Well, I think that's a silly joke."

Elisabeth: And they generally agree? Do you think?

Ruth: Well, sometimes I just nudge my friend and say things like, "Don't you think that's stupid?" and they always agree with me. Might not say it out loud. But I never let it go on. It's the same with racist jokes, and that. If anybody calls someone "black Paki" or something, I — god! Pat really gets on my nerves. She's always doing that. So I just shout at her.

We had, and still have, difficulty trying to understand how she as a child, and I as her lesbian mother, are jointly oppressed, although we have a strong sense of it in our lives. We did begin to understand, however, why it was that I had never tried to persuade her that lesbianism was

better than heterosexuality.

Ruth: You've never influenced me, never said it's better to be a lesbian or anything like that. You've more influenced me in socialism and anti-sexism really, haven't you?

Elisabeth: I do think it's essential to be a feminist and a socialist.

Ruth: But not essential to be a lesbian.

Elisabeth: No, not at all.

Ruth: Only to you, it's essential. But you've never tried to influence me in that, and I have got lots of ideas on socialism, and I definitely am very anti-sexist. I mean, if there is any sexist comments made I normally shout my head off at the person. That's at school.

Elisabeth: I think I'd find it very hard later on to maintain a relationship with you if you turned out to be very sexist or right wing, whereas I don't have any feelings about — I mean, as far as your sexuality is concerned I don't . . .

Ruth: As long as it wasn't a conservative sexist male —

Elisabeth: I'd find that very hard to take. I don't know how I'd cope with that.

Ruth: I wouldn't. You know that I wouldn't, because those are my strongest feelings. So I wouldn't, would I?

Elisabeth: You might find it quite hard to find a non-sexist man. Our generation found it quite hard; but it might be easier for you. Do you think it will?

Ruth: Well, they'll be slightly sexist, but you can change people.

Elisabeth: Oooh! Best of luck! Romantic Dream Rides Again!

Ruth: Something in between then. Well, I don't even know if I would. Do I?

Elisabeth: No. No — you don't. You don't feel pressure from me to become a lesbian, do you?

Ruth: I never feel that you want me to become a lesbian. I know that you would rather I was a lesbian.

Elisabeth: I don't think I would, now.

Ruth: No. Well, that's good. Lesbianism doesn't really matter anyway, that's what you meant, you mean as long as I'm not sexist.

Elisabeth: I think I want you to be positively a feminist, not just not sexist, but actually working for feminist causes, probably later on.

Ruth: Well, I don't know whether I would.

Elisabeth: No, I don't know yet.

My daughter last year began to attend a secondary school and evidently her own adolescent sexuality started to emerge. Since we have lived together for so long in the kind of relationship where the issue of sexuality was made crucial, I don't have any reservations about asking her to describe and if necessary defend her development in this respect.

Elisabeth: Well, what's your attitude then, towards your own sexuality?

Ruth: I don't know. I mean, I don't know yet. I think there's more chance of me being heterosexual than . . . homosexual.

Elisabeth: Why's that?

Ruth: I don't know. I'm made like that?

Elisabeth: "Born That Way"?

Ruth: Yes, well, you could put it like that. Well you could think that with all the influence from you that I'd, you know, be more likely to be homosexual, but I'm not, so it's probably because I'm just made like that.

Elisabeth: I don't mind about that.

Ruth: Well, I know plenty of girls at my school that look like they're going to be lesbians, I mean, honestly you can . . .

Elisabeth: Pick them out?

Ruth: Oh, no, Mummy . . . you can . . . you can tell. I don't mean it nastily . . .

Elisabeth: Look like Constance, do they?

Ruth: No, but, oh shut up. No, you can — I mean, they just look, I'm sure there's about five girls in my school at least . . .

Elisabeth: I should bloody well hope so!

Ruth: Well then! Thank you! There is then! And I can see them.

Elisabeth: Yes well, what is it about us then, that makes us look like that?

Ruth: I don't know — I think they're more natural, and they don't wear skirts and that sort of thing. But anyway, these children, I happen to know some of them, and their parents are heterosexual, and you'd think with their influence they wouldn't be. You see, I don't think it just comes from influence.

Elisabeth: I'm not trying to influence you to be homosexual.

Ruth: I know you're not! But I'm . . . just saying that I'm more likely to be heterosexual in my own feelings. I think I would . . . I suppose I'm just more attracted to males than to females. But I don't know why. I don't think you can just be born like something, but it's not influence either.

And so my child begins to debate whether her sexuality is biologically determined, influenced by me, or socially constructed. She realises she'll have to explain it to herself, and to me.

I don't think of myself now as completed, although I know I have sorted out quite a few contradictions which had been troubling me for years. Here I have simply tried to describe certain changes which have come about through having to make my politics clear in my daily life with my child.□

We would like to hear from other feminists about their experiences with children.

Elisabeth, Ruth and Constance are pseudonyms. They believe the heterosexual world might possibly still contain a threat to them and in particular to Ruth. This decision was taken with great regret, after long discussions, and is an example of a continuing oppression.



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SHOXSSEE — vocals with Siouxsie and the Banshees

What are your songs about
The sort of things no one else has written about like:
Make-up To Break Up

Spots warts and blemishes
And deep receding crevices
Just seem to disappear
With foundation on my face

Shadow conjures cheekbones
And hides a nasal disgrace
A disfigured atrocity
Jutting out of place

'A Phone Call to Scrapheap' is about euthanasia, 'The Lords Prayer' we do more or less the same — we try not to practice it too much so it stays spontaneous...
What made you want to get into punk music

It's not punk
Well you play on the same bill as punk bands
It's better than being on the same bill as Elton John. I've always wanted to sing. I used to sing onto a cassette at home. I took singing lessons when I was frustrated 'cos I couldn't get into a band. It's good 'cos you learn basic stomach control and breathing.

I saw you at the 100 Club
That was the first gig, we just got together because someone couldn't turn up. I didn't know anyone except the bass player and we only had an hour's rehearsal. We decided to do the Lords Prayer and then go on playing 'till we got chucked off.

I hear you might get signed ^{bloke}
We want to get signed but one ~~broke~~ came down from a record co. and said to our manager, 'here's a pretty girl, we could put her with a bunch of session men and make hit records'. I've come this far on my own terms, I won't compromise now.

I think the whole punk thing has got out of hand, like the people who go out at night dressed up like punks and then go to work in a bank the next day in a suit. It's a lie, it's not what it started out being about.

GAYE ADVERT — bass player with The Adverts

How long have you been playing bass

I started a year ago, I was a bit slow to pick it up, but I really liked it so I stuck at it. It's not a very good bass, it only cost £35 and it keeps bending out of shape.

How did the Stiff Records promotional picture come about — Your head on a nude woman's body

I met Jake Riviera [Stiff Records guy'nor] at the Roxy and I was really broke. He was talking about £10 to do a picture so I was interested. The original had me with a coat on and I didn't know they were going to do anything else with it. 'T' told them it wasn't a good idea.

What about when you were taken by Stiff Records to an Island reps. meeting and offered as a prize to whoever sold the most records

That was a joke, I wasn't going to actually do anything. There were thirty or forty blokes there, I think they were a bit stunned afterwards. I got £10 for that as well and it paid a week's rent. Got a free LP too.

What was your first gig like

I never knew what would happen, but nothing went really wrong. It was at the Roxy and I knew people so I thought if I made a mistake they'd be nice. I concentrate on my playing all the time, I don't think up weird things to do, I keep pretty still. Once I did it OK the first time, it got better and better. And I got to know about my equipment quite quickly too 'cos it's always breaking down.

The press tends to feature you in photos of the Adverts

There's something strange about all of us and mine is that I'm a woman. People aren't used to it. I wanted to be a male pop star when I was little. I didn't want to be a soppy girl pop singer. But you always get guys staring and

icking fault, like at the Roundhouse, some guy down the front yelled out 'Why don't you learn to play'. I got really angry and screamed at him to fuck off, I felt like chucking the bass at him and telling him to do better. I

The ladies fit in his waiting room

With elastoplast on their frames
But he gave me fluorescent red perspex

From his box of incredible things

It doesn't sound very good when you write it down, but it really worked with music. I like Edwin's (vocals) songs 'cos they've got humour. Wit is sometimes more effective at putting two fingers up.

The violence was horrific at the first gig we did, I had to go off stage. But at the next one, even when things were going OK, a woman came up and threw beer all over me.

That's what upset me, I wouldn't have minded if it had been a guy. —grr. But it's not gonna worry me any more, guys like that aren't worth listening to, they come with the idea that you're not gonna be good enough, they don't actually listen.

What did you do before

I worked in a pub but I got sacked because I gave food away or didn't charge enough for it — well it was expensive. Anyway one day the boss caught me with a pasty in my bag and that was it. Then I went on the dole. I've been through six months of trying to get my giro sorted out and now they've found out somehow that I'm in a band.

Women in Punk



Jordan with Johnny Rotten of Sex Pistols



Gaye Advert of the Adverts



Siouxsie and the Banshees

by Su [rich'n'famous] Denim

PUNK



Seems a bit daft to have an article about women'n' punk without talking to the SLITS -cos they're an important part of what's happening (men!) But I couldn't get hold of them anywhere, anything, anyhow before copy date deadline. BUT there's an interview with them and lots of good stuff in women'n' punk in "JOLT" number 1 & 2 - costs 25p from LUCY TOOTHPASTE, 40 COOLHURST RD. LONDON. N.8.

Debbie Harry of Blondie (American)



SOPHIE RICHMOND (runs Sex Pistols office for Malcolm McLaren)

I like the fact that the bands are accessible but then they get signed up and the record companies put them on in big money making venues - like at the Rainbow, with heavy security and everything. It's alienating, just the same old thing again.

But they have to sign with record companies or else it stays a little elitist London thing. How else can they get their records out to kids? They're bound to have to compromise, it's just a matter of how far. But I think we've shaken up the record industry a bit and managed to rip it off to a large extent [the money from A&M and EMI that the Sex Pistols got before they were dropped].

Do you think it's changed anything for women
How can I answer that with Paul in the room? No, I think there's definitely a different attitude towards women, they're treated more as people in their own right, and there's a different feeling in the audience.

I think the reason they look negative, shocking, outrageous or objectionable is to see how far they can go and what they can do. It's a bit of a pissake, sending up the whole bi-sexuality thing.

How has the music press treated the Pistols

The way they treat everything - fickle - but what else have they got to write and gossip about. I really dislike the music press and most of the punk mags are really

VIVIEN GOLDMAN - music journalist, Sounds

What has punk rock meant to the music press
At last it's given them something to write about, things have been dead so long. And it's so accessible, it's harder to talk to big rock acts. To begin with, the papers thought it was shit, but now they've changed their attitude. New Musical Express say they were first to get into it, but all they did was a bad review of the Sex Pistols. In fact Sounds was first and now it gives loads of space to New Wave bands.

What would you say was the difference between punk and new wave bands

I think the two are interchangeable really. Punks didn't like being called punks, so 'new wave' was thought up to give it a bit of dignity.

YVONNE - vocals with Heart Attacks

Things were obsessing me, out of the normal things, so I made it into poetry:
My optician wears black woollen mittens
He wears a black moustache
He said to me would you like three eyes
And I said no, I can only cope with the two, thank you very much

JORDAN (works in Malcolm McLaren's 'Sex' shop in Kings Road)

What sort of clothes do you sell for women
All the clothes are for men and women, we even do men's boots in women's sizes. We've got some nice bondage clothes for women, you could wear the trousers with any top in the shop - sort of mix'n'match really
How expensive is it
The most expensive jacket is £35. But everything is really well put together, not like a lot of punk shops
What sort of people can afford to come in and buy clothes

All sorts, it's not all young kids but I think if they want it bad enough they'll save up for it. I think it's cheap really. There's a strange combination of tough clothes and stilettoes in the punk scene

You see a lot of stilettoes, tights, revealing things, black vampy make-up - but I don't dress like that any more. I dress very tough now but still romantic.

But I feel self sufficient and happy. I don't have to worry about breaking a heel off my stiletto or laddering my tights - any more, my make-up's changed too, it's very tribal now
Has being a close friend of Johnny Rotten's landed you in any trouble

No, people keep away from me, they sort of stand away and look on. They think I'm very cold, the press have given the impression that I'm a hard bitch. But I'm not vampy or an ogre, I've been to places where they've had bets on who's got the nerve to dance with me. It sounds funny but it's true.

Do you think it's a sell out for a punk band to sign with a record co.

No 'cos you need big record companies to support you
What about starting up your own

They'd just squash a little company, there are only four big distributors and it's a closed market. You need to get someone high up in a record company to like you and cooperate. But what happens is that even if an executive is for you, he gets stifled by the shareholders and the money people. You need money 'cos it gets you places. Punk bands should have status, the emphasis shouldn't be on being poor, down-trodden dole queue kids. It

HARRY — photographer on Sniffin' Glue (punk

Sniffin' Glue was the first punk mag to come out Yes definitely. An MP tried to ban it because he said it was pro drugs and against the public interest. It started out just xeroxed up to no.5 but now it's printed litho and we distribute about 5,000.

A lot of other mags have started up Some of them because Mark P. [who was doing the mag. then] was getting loads of letters in, and he said rather than print them all, start up your own mag. So a lot started up, some were just one-offs though. There's Ripped And Torn, 48 Thrills, Shews, Fishnet Tights, London's Outrage, Situation, Moron, Bondage . . .

Who buys it

Well I thought it was just kids, from about fourteen up, but this bloke who sells it in Soho market says city gents and businessmen buy it too. Some people say we're turning commercial, selling out, that we shouldn't have ads. But I think it helps the bands and people buy it all over England, the States and Europe.

Have you give much coverage to the women involved

I took some pictures of this girl called Debbie at Dingwalls once, she's a fan, she's quite well known. And loads of papers asked me to do sessions of girls in their gear — like Club International, that porn mag, asked me to get two girls and a fella together and make out like they were fighting. I don't want to do that sort of stuff. That's the image that the papers give out and that's how people get the wrong idea. I've been to really loads of gigs taking pictures and I've not seen much violence. You get people bumping each other when they're dancing but that's all. When there is a fight, it's usually because somebody's read the papers and they go down looking for a fight.

UDY NYLON — vocals with Snatch (not yet done a gig)

Who will your audience be

This is the first group I've been in, I don't know anything about audiences. I can't honestly say I care, though I know I should. I'd say we're definitely a New Wave band, it's a larger category, more concept, less anger. We're not narrow enough to be punk, we're wider interest.

What about your lyrics

They're good strong rock'n'roll — first. People will only say they're feminist because we're women but it's more individual. I

Would you say your stuff is similar to Patti Smith's

No, she's far more into art. Less than 2% of the people in the world have read Rimbaud — I have and I like what she does, there's always room for purist art for a minority. We're more accessible but I've no intention of compromising one inch.

EDWIN — vocals with Heart Attacks

I'm going to bring out this magazine on Blondie [US New Wave band], cartoon style. Debbie Harry [vocalist with Blondie] is fantastic, she looks like a dumb blonde, but she's as sharp as a razor blade.

DEBBIE HARRY — vocals with Blondie *

I really like Brigitte Bardot a lot, when she was really cool, she did a lot of cool things. She was a sort of continental punk I guess. And I learned a lot of things from the Beatles about sassiness. I always thought they were sassy, that was my label for them. Attitude is very important. And I always felt that sex is a cool thing to sell. It's a sure thing.

Would you be disturbed if you were recognised only as a pop personality and sex symbol, rather than as a legitimate rock vocalist I'll take whatever they want to give me.

*[reprinted from Sounds April 16 1977]



SUSIE MCEWAN — would-be drummer with The Toilets

Heard you were getting a band together, who else will be in it?

Catwoman on bass — she looks really bizarre — she was on the front cover of Anarchy in the UK [mag produced by Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren]. Erika on guitar and we're looking for a vocalist.

Is it going to be all women?

Yes, well it's easier in a lot of ways. I mean we're not lesbians or women's libbers or anything like that. I just don't like mixed bands. I think it looks funny, just doesn't flow somehow.

Have you thought of a name

Oh yes, we thought of that before we got the band together, it's going to be the Toilets.

What sort of stuff will you play

Don't know yet, we have to find a writer, none of us can write music. Are you just writing about women?

POLY-STYRENE — vocalist with X-ray Spex

My Mind Is Like A Plastic Bag
That corresponds to all those ads
It sucks up all the rubbish
That is fed in through my ear
I eat kleenex for breakfast
And use soft hygienic watablix to dry my tears

My mind is like a switchboard
With crossed and tangled lines
Contented with confusion
That is plugged into my head
I don't know what's going on
It's the operator's job, not mine, I said.

is ti
(more)



Helen Wheels (American)

lamb/
lick your lips
you're so rude/
good ...

woman

Poly-Styrene of X-ray Spax

Cherry Vanilla (American)

FRANKI GREEN — drums with Jam Today

The one good thing I can see in punk rock is its attitude to demystifying music: stressing that you don't have to be technically knowledgeable and good according to professional standards to make music. I think that may be useful for women involved in it, as I think it's important for women generally. But from what little I know of it, it seems that most of the emphasis is on style as much as musical demystification, and the presentation of punk is just as sexist, if not more, than any other male rock music. In fact it seems to be a logical outgrowth of the mainstream of capitalist cock rock — the heavyness, violence, contempt for the audience, etc. What does it give women, except another male style to identify with. I think it's just as misogynist and oppressive to us, as what it is supposedly reacting against. It's just the rebellion of the young man against the old. I identified with rock'n'roll in the '60's, when parents were freaking out, but now, from a feminist perspective, I realise it was just another male trip, with nothing in it for women. Maybe punk rock is just the same.

ROB GOTOBED — drums with Wire

How would you feel about a woman joining the band
Well, we don't need anyone else at the moment
What if you did
That would depend on what she was like
What if she was really good
Oh that wouldn't matter, don't really care about that. It would depend on her personality.

STEVE — Social Committee, books bands for Royal College of Art

There are very few really hard up, unemployed kids involved in the punk scene, although they're meant to be a major part of it — a real hard core. I mean, look at all the people who queued up night after night able to pay £1.50 to get into the Roxy — and they're charged astronomical amounts for the beer.

So who are all those people in the Roxy? They're all fucking art students, or people who are working — maybe in dossy, dead end jobs — but they're not that hard up. Punk rock has been made by the media — nothing else. That's one of the things I hate about it, it's just as false as all the other things. Like back in the 60's, the hippy thing, all the weekend hippies — you know, work in a bank all week and at the weekend you put your beads on. It's just a different image. The punk image is the archetypal delinquent tearaway kid and the whole thing is full of people who aren't.

On one of these ridiculous TV programmes "punk rock what's it all about", they were interviewing kids in Kings Road on Saturday. It's full of punks parading up and down. There was a guy and a girl from Manchester who'd saved up £150 from their wages to come down to buy clothes. They said they did it about every three months — spend all day in Kings Road and go back to Manchester to look amazing.

There's a lot of bands who try to live up to the punk image who aren't punk at all. Because it's money. Look at The Stranglers or the Count Bishops, who've been around for ages. Fucking ridiculous, suddenly doing lots of violent movements on stage and racing around and spitting into the crowd 'cos they've read the papers.

I think the only real punk band around is the Sex Pistols. Because theoretically a punk band should be unable to hold a record contract with anybody, unable to get on TV, radio or in any of the nice papers, and should be total no-hopers who keep fucking it up. Because they don't care what people think and are not prepared to cow-tow to those kind of values.

All the power is in the hands
Of people rich enough to buy it.
While we walk the streets
Too chicken to even try it.
And everybody does what they're told to
And everybody eats supermarket soul food

lyrics by The Clash

How did you get the name
I was looking through a porn mag and I saw an ad for those glasses that are supposed to let you see through things.
How did the band get together
I've been wanting to do it for ages, 'cos I'd been writing songs, so I advertised in Melody Maker.
Do you all have jobs as well
Yea, except for Lora Logic (the sax player), she's still at school
You'd rather have a mixed band
Yea, 'cos if you think you're as good as guys, then you should be able to work with them on an equal level. Sex isn't an issue, maybe it has been in the past but there should be a new approach. Forget you're a girl, just think of it from a music point of view. I think all girl bands are sort of woman chauvinist, bit women's lib. Women's lib is changed now, it was necessary before, but I feel equal now.
Have you had to cope with violence
No, the nearest I got to it was when Arianna of the Slits tried to pull the mike wires.
Do you reckon a lot of the audience are art student types who can afford flashy clothes
It's a mixture. There's the ordinary kids who make their own clothes — some of them wear dustbin liners. But then there's the ones in the 'in scene', they're middle class, they just buy and buy all their clothes from Sex (shop owned by Sex Pistol's manager).
What about the ones into the Nazi thing
Well there's the art student sort who know about the Nazi period and like it 'cos it was decadent and the others who wear swastikas and stuff just to get a reaction as they walk down the street. They do it for a laugh.
Have you had any record companies interested
Yea, some have been down but they told our manager it was a bit dodgy with girls in the band.

on
the
road

LONDON



The Post Office Tower and Big Ben, London.

We don't have room in this issue for the double page spread we need.

(From now on our Regional Page will be two pages.)

So we'll be listing all the many groups, campaigns, publications etc. based in London in next month's *Spare Rib*. If your group wants a mention, please send us brief details immediately. There won't be space to list all the small consciousness raising groups that meet regularly. If you want to find out about a group in your area contact *A Woman's Place* or your nearest Women's Centre, which we list here.

A Woman's Place

We're at 42 Earlham St, WC2. (No phone yet 'cos GPO messing about.) Open Mondays-Saturdays 10.00am - 6.00pm.

Feminist information centre and meeting place for women only. Books, publications, records (many from USA) list of women's groups, referral service, coffee, tea and talk. We're often used as a contact point for women from overseas and outside London.

We produce a weekly newsletter which has a calendar of feminist activities, notices of

groups in existence and new ones starting. Also a free ranging opinion section, poems and general observations! (10p per copy, 15p by post).

A Woman's Place is run by an open collective which meets each Tuesday at 7.00pm and work as an autonomous group within the Women's Liberation Movement.

Since the April 6th Break-In, we've built up our files again, but we still need contacts and information for women to use. Thanks to everyone who's already sent us this and don't forget - **OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON DONATIONS!** (Collective statement 31/5/77)

The Women's Research and Resources Centre. (WRRC)

WRRC is an information service for students, teachers, pamphlet-writers, journalists, anyone doing research on feminist topics. Facilities include library, research index, seminars, newsletter. Subscriptions invited (£5 p.a. or what you can afford) but nonsubscribers welcome to use facilities. Shortly moving to 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 but contact us at 158 North Gower Street, NW1. 01-388 0882.

Women's Arts Alliance.

10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, NW1 (01-935 1841). (SR 57)

WOMEN'S CENTRES

HORNSEY. 147 Archway Rd., N6.

The Centre is part of the Archway Road Life Widening Scheme - a mixed collective with various facilities open to all. Job creation is sponsoring it so we'll have a worker. The Centre has two small rooms and the use of a garden. (The other workers in 147 will also be women in pottery and weaving workshops.)

Meetings on Wednesdays at 8.00pm: First Wed. Open with speaker; 2nd Wed. Planning; 3rd Wed. Discussion; 4th Wed. Newsletter. The health group meets on Mondays at 8.00pm. On Saturdays (11.00am - 3.00 pm) we're open for pregnancy testing, and we're planning practical workshops for Sat. afternoons - including health, electricity, massage, photography, plumbing, bicycles.

NB. Files from Essex Road Centre, Islington (now closed) will be kept at Hornsey from July.

CAMDEN. Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd. NW3. tel: 01-794 3881.

Yoga, karate, health groups, study groups, feminist therapy, free pregnancy testing.

Each Thursday we have general planning and discussion meetings with a communal meal. Write to us for Newsletter.

BRENT. 138 Minet Place. NW 10. tel: 01-965 3324.

GRAFTON RD. 158 Grafton Rd. NW5.

SOUTH EAST LONDON. Thurlow House, Weighton Rd, Penge, SE20.

SOUTH LONDON. Meeting to discuss setting up a Centre held every fortnight on Wednesday evenings. Tel. Caroline 01-674 5235.

STOKE NEWINGTON. 1 Cazenove Road, London N16. Tel 01-806 6664.

This centre is mainly for local women and is trying to make women's liberation a more acceptable concept to the "average woman in the street" through practical workshops and discussions.

The workshops already started are: guitar, theatre group, yoga and relaxation, adult literacy, consumer advice, renovation of basement for printing, silk screening and other crafts, Gay counselling.

Groups in process of starting: self defence, printing (we have an offset litho press, but it needs transporting down from Liverpool) consciousness raising, 'Introduction to Women's Liberation', women

against sexism, women's health and alternative medicine.

For more information contact Nandita at the above address.

WALTHAMSTOW. 161 Mark House Rd., Walthamstow E17.

WEST LONDON. No Centre yet but we're meeting to discuss starting one. Contact Debbie 01-579 5470. And come to West London Open Meeting on 2 July. (see Shortlist.)

WHITECHAPEL. 3/5 Adelina Grove, Grove Dwellings, E1. We have space for women's groups to meet and a regular monthly meeting for all who want to get involved in the Centre itself. Contact 515-1174.

JUST FOR FUN

Julia's "Upstairs Room" disco has moved to the Royal Albert in St Stephens Terrace, Bolney St, SW8., just round the corner from the Festival Inn, where it had been going strong for two years.

A women only disco, it was run by Julia Wright, who put on the records and put up the feminist posters. Six months ago a new landlord started demanding rent for the room, and Julia agreed to pay £7 a night - ie. £21 a week. "He put up his prices at the bar and made more money on women's nights than the rest of the week put together", says Julia.

Hostilities came to a head when he tried to kick out Julia and run the place without her and her politics - with more money for himself. "It was like he was trying to split the workforce" says Julia "and I was the shop-steward! We picketed outside the Festival Inn, to warn women against going in, and we found somewhere else in 15 minutes. It was great to find out how strong we are." In nearby Radnor Terrace they held a "Stuff the Jubilee, Fuck the Festival Inn" street party, and got set up in the Royal Albert.

There's a disco there - with a flower and a candle on every table! - Saturdays and Sundays from 7.30pm (admission 30p - it's 50p now at the Festival Inn). On Sundays too, there's a lunch-time bar, 12-2pm, with live music, and women meet there to go off and play football. Enquiries: Julia 01-622 1896.

Women's Monthly Event: (see Shortlist.)

Women's Cinema: Same place as disco above. Phone 01-437 4355 x124 for details.

Matty's Bar (recommended by Julia who does Feminist Disco). **WOMEN ONLY** Excel Court, Whitcombe St. WC1. (closed Mon.)

Sappho Disco: Upstairs Bar Sols Arms, Hampstead Road, NW1.

WOMEN ONLY. Next disco on 9 July 8.00 - 11.00pm. (costs 50p)

Watch out for Jam Today, a feminist rock band.

Money distorts even more the personality of a woman. Because money is power, it upsets the balance of nature. The rich wife laughs at her husband's attempts to earn his living. His profession becomes his hobby; his salary is his pocket money instead of their food and drink.

Piers Paul Read in *The Observer*
Sent in by Liz Paige, Moulton

A LIGHTER SIDE of the stern facade shown by the late Lord Chief Justice, Lord Goddard, has been brought to my attention by his youngest daughter PRUE CLAYTON following the publication of his biography by colleague FENTON BRESLER.

"My father always had an eye for a pretty girl," says Mrs. Clayton. "I remember the time when he had a bigamy trial before him. It happened that the bigamous wife was not an attractive person."

"At the end of the trial he told the prisoner, 'Bigamy is a crime which varies greatly in its enormity. I could send you to prison for a very long time, but on reflection,' he said, looking towards the bigamous wife, 'I think you have been punished enough. I therefore sentence you to be jailed for one day.'"

Lady Olga Maitland in the *Scottish Sunday Express*
Sent in by Mary Nevill,
Invermoriston, Invernesshire

The Astral
Automatic



It takes a man
to wear it

Ms. Cheryl Thake,
52 Adelaide Street,
Portsmouth,
Hants.

Dear Ms. Thake,

12th January, 1976.

I have received your letter of 4th January, via the Aviation Division.

We do like our advertising to have an impact, but not quite in the way that it has on you. You might care to take a different view of this copy being a consequence of male chauvinism on the part of the Advertising Agency and ourselves when I tell you that it was proposed and championed by a female copy writer: the men raised an eyebrow! We were, however, assured that there is a school of thought that does not agree with yours (or mine) and that the copy was good.

When you go into advertising you will probably find yourself having to give advice on matters of this sort. I do hope that you manage to make the right decisions all the time.

Thank you for writing to us. Perhaps you might still care to add a decorative watch to your collection for wearing at times when your excellent Bulova is not quite the style.

Yours sincerely,

H.A. ROOPER
Director & General Manager
Clock & Watch Division

A letter in response to a complaint
about the advertisement for
Smith's Astral watch
Sent in by Cheryl Thake, Portsmouth

Tooth & Nail

PLEASE KEEP SENDING
SEXIST CUTTINGS,
PHOTOS, QUOTES AND
ADVERTISEMENTS TO
"TOOTH AND NAIL",
INCLUDING ALL DETAILS
WHICH MAY BE NEEDED
BY PEOPLE WANTING
TO FIGHT BACK.

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT
SEXIST ADS:
the manufacturers of the product
advertised and/or the agency
who make up the ad.
WHO TO COMPLAIN TO:
The Independent Broadcasting
Authority, for ITV ads and
programmes, 70 Brompton Road,
London SW9.

The Advertising Standards
Authority, though notoriously
unresponsive to complaints
about sexism, 15 Ridgmount
Street, London WC1.
WHO TO WORK WITH:
AFFIRM (Alliance For Fair
Images and Representation in
Media). A group acting against
sexism and offensive stereotyping,
can be contacted at 35
Coleharne Road, London SW10.

THE NATIONAL UNION
OF JOURNALISTS
Send a letter of complaint
about sexist material to:
The Mother or Father of the NUJ
Chapel at the publication
concerned, with a copy to the
editor, and to the Equality
Working Party, NUJ, Accord
House, 314 Grays Inn Road,
London WC1

THE COTTON FAMILY

Mrs. Cotton is at home.



1. What is she doing in this picture?

She's cleaning the house.
She's washing the kitchen floor.

2. What is she doing in this picture?

She's cooking the dinner.

Mrs. Cotton is a housewife.
What does a housewife do?

3. She stays at home.
4. She cleans the house.
5. She cooks the dinner.

What does a housewife do every day?

Every day she stays at home

stays
cleans
cooks

6. Every day she stay- at home.
7. Every day she clean- the house.
8. Every day she cook- the dinner.
9. Every day she s the

From *We Live in England* for teaching English to immigrant
children, published by the Schools Council, Books for
Schools Ltd

PAGE 30

SUNDAY MIRROR, April 3, 1977



"The second best
investment I ever
made—my wife
was the first."

Martin Steinberg
Taxi Driver

An ad for BUPA (private medical insurance) Provident House, London NW2
Sent in by Susanna Steele, London NW2

THE RAPIST Michael Kenyon

Nothing happens in the comatose Irish town of Dungoole — until a 6 ft American Women's Lib militant gets raped. The local police may be uncomfortable (especially when murder is added to rape), but the reader can just lie back and enjoy it.

May £2.95

Published by Collins Ltd, 14 St James Place, London SW1
Sent in by R Alexander and G Colwell, London SW19

Spare Rib 53



'Pearly Porage Oats — a nourishing way to start the day' had done the public very well for sixty years, but clearly would do no longer. The client, lethargic for so long but now prodded by falling sales and the onslaught of muesli onto the nation's breakfast tables, rumbled and heaved and demanded a different slogan; something newer and better: something more emotional, probably to do with mother love.

The task of shaping the new campaign went, appropriately enough, to Audrey Camelot. A bright name for a bright girl, as the Accounts Executive said. Audrey, he told the client, could pull the loving evocations of family life out of thin air, as could no one else, and twine them with commercial brightness, and impart her enthusiasms to art director and marketing man, and nimbly come up trumps, time and time again, with a campaign which not only sold well on account of its creativity, rationality and sensitivity, but demanded the professional respect of clients and advertisers everywhere. So he said, handsome, golden man that he was.

Audrey, for some reason, had trouble with Pearly Oats.

Pearly Porage, perfect Porage,
fattening way to an old-fashioned day?

A wild and wandering mind has its usefulness in advertising, but not when it appears to hate the product it is required to dwell upon. Nothing wrong with the product — no more nor less than a nourishing way to start the day, as everyone in the country knew, and had for decades. Something wrong with Audrey, perhaps? Or so the Accounts Executive wondered.

Of course, said Audrey snappily to the Accounts Executive, there's something wrong with me, there's something wrong with all of us, but where does that get us? So long as it gets us somewhere by the end of the week, he replied, and Audrey stretched her arms behind her back, absently and automatically, so that her breasts showed to advantage. The Accounts Executive knew them well, as it happened, but familiarity never dulled his fondness for them.

'You always get like this just before you come up with something,' he reassured her, father to his little girl, and she hoped so, and left with a cheerful skip and a hop, and a bounce of delectable bosom, warming his heart.

To business then. 'Early Pearly? Swirly Pearly on the plate, early pearly by the gate?'

Something there, but where was the mother love? There clearly had to be mother love. The client, eldest son of the first founder of Pearly Porage Oats, had recently re-married and his new young wife was pregnant. The day-to-day practicalities of breakfast would hardly entrance him: that might come later, but not now.

He would see breakfast as something to linger over, not merely to get through in order to get to the school bus. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday passed. Friday morning.

At mid-day on Friday the telephone rang. Daisy Duncan, Audrey's friend. They'd been to the same Council school, back-of-the-buildings in a London slum. It was demolished now, but its memory still lived. A group of hopeful, lively children, fighting their way to a better life. Great things had been promised for Audrey, and greater still for Daisy, whose poems had appeared for three years running in a Poetry in British Schools' publication. Daisy could embroider, too, and reached Grade 8 on the piano. A plain girl with a large nose and a muddy complexion, but lively and creative, with a host of friends. Pretty, lonelier Audrey merely passed exams: Daisy had real talent.

But now Daisy was in tears, and Audrey seldom cried. At 12.10 Audrey left the office, took a taxi, and went to visit Daisy.

'I used to think,' said Daisy sadly, that everything would get better when I got to be 40. I was 40 yesterday and it hasn't. 'I would have sent you a card,' said Audrey, 'only I thought you might prefer to forget.'

Daisy lay on the sofa, still in her nightie, her narrow, plain face swollen with tears, her knobbly toes poking out from beneath a quilt, too distressed, apparently, to so much as get up and do the obvious tasks — sweeping the table free of crumbs, clearing the grease from the sink.

Well, someone has to do them. Daisy's friend Audrey took up dustpan and dishcloth in her well-manicured hands, and saw to it all, careful not to spot her denim Yves St. Laurent skirt and jacket, or mark her yellow calf shoes.

'You just forgot,' said Daisy mournfully. 'But it's good of you to come. I thought you'd be having some smart lunch in some expense account restaurant. You are lucky.' 'They all taste alike,' said Audrey, lightly, lying.

Audrey had come at once, forswearing the excitement of lunch at Simpson's — a little too much Campari before the meal, then perhaps an avocado vinaigrette, then a plate of thinly cut rare beef, with a green salad, and a good claret, and black coffee — with an accounts director who was trying to get her to bed. Audrey was always gratified and excited when some grey-suited man or other actually, and as a long-term project, and in an old-fashioned way, set about seducing her. Little me, little Audrey! It happened only rarely, of course, these days; not because Audrey's face or figure betrayed her age or because her sexual attractiveness had in any way diminished — on the contrary — but because the world had changed about her; sexual transactions had become a simple, quicker, cheaper matter of will you, won't you, no harm done either way, no money spent, and the main obstacle to union being opportunity, not readiness.

Mind you, Audrey's advertising agency, as she was well aware, was inhabited by golden people, who had the confidence of their looks, youth and intelligence, and who did not suffer, as the rest of the world still seemed to, the fear of personal humiliation and sexual rejection.

But what happened to them when they got old? Were they fired, did they resign, was there some other advertising agency somewhere, especially designed for oldsters, located somewhere in the sticks, where they all, the tarnished men and women, went? No one stepped into the gilded agency lift of a morning, or out of it of an evening, who was not healthy, handsome, youthful and able. Only the personnel officer, strangely, limped and was old, old: old so far beyond sex, so far the other side of pensionable age, as to hardly count as human.

Audrey, creaming her face night and morning with a lotion well imbued with revitalising essence, would sometimes worry about these things, but not for long. The night ahead, the day in front, was too busy, too full of challenges, too stuffed with the admiration of the opposite sex and that of her professional colleagues, to allow any real anxiety the time it needed to clutch her heart properly and make her catch her breath with fear.

The Pearly Porage Way to Eternal life, eternal youth? Oh, come along now Audrey, enough of this fantasy; where's the mother love?

Audrey's husband Jordan had gone off long ago, long ago.

'I did warn you,' Daisy had said then, sobbing bitterly on her friend's behalf, speaking with all the wisdom of the early sixties, 'you can't hold down a marriage and a career. Not fair to a husband, not fair to the children. Now see what's happened! I told you so! Oh, Audrey, poor Audrey!'

Daisy, with her three little ones at her heels, clamouring and clamorous, secure in the knowledge that her way was the best, that the sacrifice of self would be rewarded in the end.



After the divorce Jordan took Audrey's two, boy and girl, pigeon pair, off to the States supposedly on holiday, but never returned them. Audrey had fought a little, not too much. Glad, in the end, to be finally rid of him, and them: free to work, to drink after hours, to bed whom she pleased, as long as she pleased, without guilt or the pervasive sense of hurry that seemed to go with motherhood. She could always tell, in the gilt-panelled agency lift, who were the mothers, and who weren't. Mothers had chipped nail varnish and harassed eyes. No time!

There might be some ideal world, somewhere, thought Audrey, where docile children did smile up at mothers from cosy cots: where husbands considered their wives' thoughts, feelings and ambitions as important as their own; where housekeepers actually kept house for working mothers; and Pearly Porage Oats poured endlessly from a pan which never needed cleaning. She certainly wished it existed. If writing about it would only make it so! This honeyed world of home and polished furniture and soft looks, where men were still men and women still women! She did not deceive her readers — (if advertisements can be said to be read)

no, Audrey offered them her dreams, in all sincerity. And they accepted them, as dreams: and bought, as talismans.

And now here's poor Daisy, in tears these days for herself, and not for her friend.

Audrey's mind flickered on, as she mixed Daisy some reviving whisky and water in a smudged glass. Pearly Porage Oats. Powerful Porage Oats. Getting warmer, Audrey! Warmth, that's it. A plate of Pearly Porage, warmer than a mother's love. No. Too crude, and anyway the Advertising Standards Authority wouldn't have it. Nothing could be warmer than a mother's love, they'd say. Nothing. Why then; Pearly Porage, just as warm as mother's love. Loving mother, warming day! Prove your love, with warming Pearly Porage Oats. The trouble being, pearls are cold but Porage is hot. Iced Pearly Porage Oats — the midsummer breakfast for midnight people! Come on now, Audrey! Please!

'It's not like you to let the house go, Daisy,' chided Audrey. 'It's his house, not mine,' hissed Daisy, 'he makes that clear enough. Why should I bother to clean it. Let her do it.'

Her parents should never have called her Daisy, Audrey had always thought it, inflicting upon their daughter a chirpy, peeping sweetness, which the skinny, wilful Daisy could never properly incorporate into herself. Their ambition for her. 'Donald says I've got to move out so he can live in comfort with his paramour and her brats, and I'll have to make do with a pokey flat somewhere.' 'But Daisy,' said Audrey, 'you've been living here with his so-called paramour's husband for six months. He was bound to object.'

'It's altogether different. You must see it's different.'

But Audrey could not bring herself to see. She could not, on this occasion, even for Daisy's sake, be bothered to remember the details of the particular mess of this particular marriage, which was like yet so unlike all the other messes the neurotic married everywhere manage to make of their lives: could not be bothered to register the small print, the tales of coincidence, lust overheard, letters intercepted, messages misunderstood, the general crossing of wires, which accompany the dawning of illicit love and the ending of married love, and which in fiction appear improbable to the point of indignity, and in real life come two a penny: but which are all sure to end in tears, bitterness, and the wrecked lives of confused children. And all for what? The gratification of the flesh?

Dodge when you see a coincidence coming. It will end in no good. If you meet an ex-lover by amazing chance, a missed train, a crossed line, cut him dead, walk quietly past. Fate is against you, not for you, and signalling as much.

Audrey sleeps with married men: brief interludes, happy memories: should life be more than this? Daisy committed adultery — she uses the extraordinary term herself — just once, with a married man, confessed, and before she knew where she was her psychiatrist husband Donald (A doctor! Oh Daisy, what a catch! Out of the working classes, at last; socially mobile: we knew you'd do it, we little girls at the Council school!) was sleeping with her lover's wife, Dora by name, and going to live with her moreover; and her own lover, of that one, single occasion, unable to return home, but obliged to come to live with Daisy, for the sake of a bed. Well, so she said — and the seven children of both marriages shuttling between the two households. Daisy's three, nearly full grown, left home in consequence a mite too early for their own good: but her rival Dora's four were very young: had to have nappies changed and bottles made up. Poor Daisy. Her lover left eventually for younger blood, but still his four were dumped on her, of a weekend, so Donald and Dora could copulate in peace. And now Donald wanted his home back, the better to house his new lady and the four young children.

After all, Daisy started it. Donald could never forgive her for breaking up his home in the way she had. And had he not paid for the house, after all, working for it all these years, while Daisy sat back and scribbled the occasional poem, and filled the house up with queers and young musicians he couldn't get on with and

clearly cuckolded him regularly. Who was to believe Daisy when she said but it was only the once, the one man, the one time, I was drunk? Who wanted to believe her? Who ever believes the pregnant young girl who cries, but it was the first time! Only once and only him. Never before and never after. Life's not like that.

Oh, but it is. Richer, wilder and stranger than fiction, by far.

Pearly Oats, the way to a child's heart.
Mother power, porage power. Pearly Porage Power.
The Pearl at the heart of breakfast.

Daisy sobbed: the sound broke into Audrey's train of thought. Real life must come before advertising, she told herself. What's happening to me?

'Perhaps you'd better have a tranquiliser,' said Audrey, doubtfully.

Indignation stopped Daisy's tears.

'Throughout my married life,' said Daisy, 'as you ought to know, Audrey, whenever I seemed depressed or reproachful, Donald would hand me pills. Stand over me until I took them. I spent most of my life in a stupor. Whatever the latest thing was that they handed out in the acute wards, to keep up the latest myth, enable them to say they'd thrown away the keys of the loony bins — those were the pills he'd dole out to me. Experimenting, no doubt, in the ways of best achieving a quiet life. And look what he did to the children.'



That Audrey could remember. Donald started Debbie on tranquilisers when she complained of nightmares at the age of three, and she was found to be still on them at the age of nine, when a teacher enquired why the child spent her days in school sleeping.

'But why did you go on giving them?' Audrey had enquired of Daisy, horrified. 'Because I didn't know what they were, and he was a doctor,' pleaded Daisy. 'I thought he knew best.'

Donald treated David with hormones to speed up a delayed puberty, to the detriment of his personality. Or such was the probation officer's defence when David was presently in trouble with the police, peddling drugs, stealing cigarettes. Donald gave Doreen aversion therapy to cure a mild attack of teenage homosexuality, thus fixing the tendency for life. Or so Daisy said.

My own children, thought Audrey, where are they now? Wholesome young Americans, sixteen and seventeen, freckled and free. I hope. Thank God I don't have responsibility for them. Why do some people's lives go sour?

Mother flown? Pearly Porage Oats, the perfect mother surrogate! Why bother with mother when P-Porage will do?

Daisy consented to get up off the sofa and dress. Something

achieved! 'Of course, my parents have cast me off,' said Daisy. 'The world can't abide an abandoned wife.' 'But Daisy, you did abandon Donald first.' Useless.

Audrey's father died when she was six, her mother when she was twelve. What better gift can a mother give a daughter than to die early? So the daughter can endure her own life, unobserved; go to hell with no one grieving.

'I haven't been asked out anywhere since Donald left.'

Delightful Daisy, whom everyone loved — funny, witty and brave, popular everywhere: dragging the tatters of her life behind, like some once luxurious gown caught up in a carriage wheel, mangled but still amazing: Daisy, sheltered in those days by the looming shadow of a husband. No need for his presence in the flesh: the thought of him would do, make Daisy safe. Now he's gone, and Daisy's naked in her distress, and it might be catching. Probably is.

Pearls before swine, porage before bacon. They need a 2-course breakfast! No. Not Nutrition. Mother love. Please! Pearly smiles, early smiles. Warming the cockles of a mother's heart. Cockles? Oysters, surely. Pearls. Or mussels. Oh, Audrey!

Meusli and the top of the milk for Audrey's passing strangers. Fresh coffee and hot milk if they're lucky, but mostly cold. The flesh languid, the spirit soothed, but the mind looking forward to the closing of the front door, the return of privacy. No, don't ring me, I'll ring you. Audrey, taking her pleasures where she finds them, careful they don't change to pain.

'Christ,' said Audrey aloud, startling Daisy, 'where will it all end?' 'Death,' said Daisy, her face wiped, her waist belted, life returning, pleasure starting up in her again — this her great charm, her great strength; her resilience, the way she loved, even in her distress, to bandy words, phrases, friendship, gossip. 'That's where it will all end. In the long run we're all dead. It's the short run interests me. If only I had a party to go to. Perhaps I'll give one.'

Donald claimed that Daisy neglected the children, never once putting their interests before her own: and that David's delinquency, Debbie's apathy, and Doreen's gayness could all be laid firmly at Daisy's door. Told the judge, and the judge believed him.

Donald had told Audrey so, too, one night some three years ago, while they lay clasped together on the sofa in the consulting room, and Audrey had half-believed him. The same shabby sofa, now in the kitchen, on which today Daisy had lain and sobbed. It had seemed at the time that Donald needed someone to talk to, rather than someone for sexual congress — the latter being of such short duration.

Audrey had called to see Daisy one evening, and found her out, but Donald advancing on her out of the dark hall, upset — so he said — because Daisy was off visiting her lover. Audrey was upset too, that Daisy should so callously have abandoned her self-appointed role as faithful wife, happy mother, and secure friend — always at home when one called, and no need to ring, if only for the difficulty she always had finding babysitters.

'They may have their ups and down, Donald and Daisy, but they're like that, like that!' Two fingers crossed. Everyone believed it. Side by side through life's vicissitudes. Someone had to be.

Pearly Oats! Your mother thrived on it! So did you! Now it's your children's turn.

Donald and Daisy. Other marriages came and went. Theirs was for ever.

'If Daisy's out with a married man,' said Audrey then, to Donald lightly, 'perhaps you should take out the wife!'

Had she put the notion in Donald's head? Could one's passing

words, so lightly spoken, really result in such terrible upheaval in so many lives?

Well, if they could stop the national flow from porage to meusli, no doubt they could break a marriage or so. Words are powerful things.

Before turning his attention to Dora, so much was for certain, Donald had taken advantage of Audrey's unexpected and comforting presence and copulated with her in the consulting room. Two naughty, upset children, behind mother's back. Rows and rows of pills everywhere, on shelves and cupboards and desks, to quench grief, staunch tears, stifle argument, quell resentment and reproach. Even, Audrey suspected, to increase sexual appetite, for the determination of Donald's approach was far bolder than the tentative nature of his actual performance. Daisy had always complained that Donald was semi-impotent. 'But it doesn't matter,' Audrey would say to her; 'I seem to get most turned on by men who hardly can.' But Audrey could see that as the years passed, it might well begin to matter.

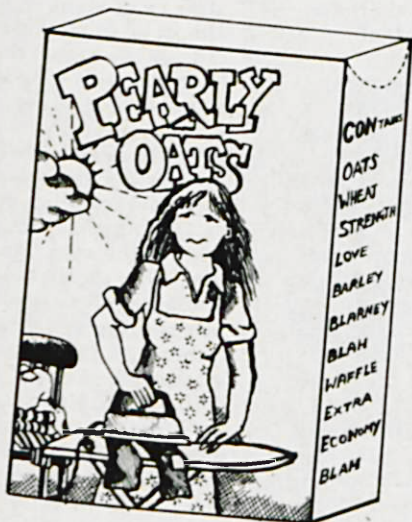
Be all that as it may, no wonder Audrey now comes running whenever Daisy cries. Guilt? No, too strong a word. A sense, rather, that she failed by giving herself where it was easiest, opened her legs in the light of a lamp chosen by Daisy, her artistic friend, to Daisy's husband, in the ridiculous hope of being included in a family group, making it whole again. That had not been the way to do it.

All the goodness of the grain — the warming power of Pearly Oats.

'Daisy,' said Audrey now, 'Donald was a dead loss. For God's sake pull yourself together, get a job, take a teacher's training course. You can't fasten yourself to a man in your youth and be still clinging on with your fingernails twenty years later. It isn't natural.' 'But he's half me,' Daisy wailed. 'I hated him for years but he's still half me.' 'Nonsense. He's half Dora, now. We're all interchangeable, all dispensible. Do try and face it, Daisy.'

Early smiles and Pearly wiles.

'It was always supposed to be enough,' said Daisy bitterly, 'to be a wife and mother.' 'Wives and mothers wear out quickly,' said Audrey. 'In any case, if that's how you see yourself, you're just about past child-bearing age, and your husband doesn't want you — so you're finished. Well, so am I, in my advertising agency. I'm getting too old, too good at my work. I'm too expensive. It's a man's world. Newer, cheaper, brighter young women come along.



Serve us right, the pair of us, for trying to ride the waves, buck the system, last too long.' 'What will we do?' asked Daisy, child-like. 'Come and live with me if you like,' offered Audrey, the thought coming out of nowhere. Could she bear it? Yes, probably. 'At any rate for a time,' she added, cautiously.

Tears sprang anew to Daisy's eyes.

'I don't know,' she said, gratefully, 'but I'll think about it.'

'I must get back to the office,' said Audrey. 'I'm working on a new campaign.' 'What?' 'Pearly Porage Oats.' 'We always have them,' said Daisy. 'Well, had. In the days when I cooked breakfast and we'd all sit down like a proper family.'



Proper families choose Pearly Porage Oats.

What's a proper family?

Why, you, me and the children, my love. On our good days.

'We had our good days,' said Daisy, smiling, magically, brightly, almost dancing: skinny and tired that she is; her hair now wiry, not silky, and beginning to grey; eyes weary about the lids, and having produced far too many tears since first they saw the light of day, to an extent nature can hardly have intended, over-working fragile tear ducts.

Step, two three. Step, two three. Daisy dances about the room like a young girl. 'I try to remember the good days. Don't you?'

Good family days begin with Porage Oats. Perhaps. But Porage Oats don't make good days. Keep the distinction clear! And move to muesli when you must.

When Audrey got back to the office she found confusion and distress. Pearly Porage Oats had been taken over by Active Breakfast Foods — an account also held by Audrey's agency — and there had been some necessary realignment of work, and seven people in the creative department, including Audrey, were to be made redundant. The Accounts Executive was to go; so was the lunchdate Audrey had missed on Daisy's behalf.

'Of course,' said the Accounts Executive sadly — 'it's all a question of pensions. Firms nowadays are run by accountants. One way or another they make sure they're never landed with an employee of pensionable age.'

Looking at him closely, Audrey could see beyond the gold to the wrinkles round his eyes and the greying of his hair, and observed that though his midriff was firm and strong, and his voice young and cheerful, and his phraseology constantly revised and kept up to date, that nevertheless the truth of age was breaking through; the sadness of long experience.

'Say what you like about it being a man's world, Audrey — and I know you do — it's certainly turned into a young person's world, male or female. Still, we mustn't complain: we had our good days!'

And nor they do, and so they had. □

reviews

WATCH OUT

CORONATION STREET

"But in the case of the newly-wed Faircloughs, about to begin life in Len's redecorated house, producer Bill Podmore makes one small and unprecedented exception.

He forecasts they will have a happy marriage — full of arguments. And it will last. 'I think it's going to be there forever,' he says. 'At least, I have no intention of breaking it up. I just hope it's not going to become boring, because marriage can easily diminish strong characters in a serial. But I don't think it will in this case.' . . ."

This quote is from the recent TV Times *Souvenir Extra* on the wedding of Len Fairclough and Rita Littlewood of Coronation Street. It is an astonishing production by Independent Television Publications in glossy fully illustrated colour by an all

male team of writers, photographers and editors; it gives a very good idea of the industry created by the serial. The *Souvenir Extra* includes long articles on how Len and Rita met, their previous romantic attachments, what all their friends in the Street think about their wedding, how many other weddings there have been over the years, how Rita chose her dress, ring, bridesmaid, presents. In fact it is a complete manual for the whole paraphernalia of the marriage ritual including future predictions of their relationship by TV Times astrologer Roger Elliot. All this in 63 pages, price 50p and no advertising at all.

Coronation Street is 16 years old and looks like going on for another 16 years. It is shown twice a week at peak viewing time with an estimated family audience of 20 million. Its advertising slot is rumoured to be the most expensive on commercial television and audience identification with its characters, rather than the actors



Another Street celebration.

who play them, is legendary.

Tony Warren, its creator, said that its purpose was "to examine a Northern working class community and in so doing to entertain," but that was in the early Sixties when attempts to introduce more realism, which meant more working class life, were fashionable. Now the Street's producer admits that the Street is beginning to look a bit anachronistic. "All over the country, old terraces like *Coronation Street* are disappearing. But a change in the Street could destroy the roots of the programme, because the architecture is as much a part of its character as the people. The architecture dictates the lifestyle." And so it has become Granada's nostalgic look back to the 1950s before affluence and the consumerist ethic corrupted the working class values, as the story goes.

Yet *Coronation Street* is

not quite an English equivalent of the American serial about the depression, *The Waltons*. The characters in the Street wear contemporary clothes and make contemporary references but so strong has the stereotyping become and so hermetic the world in which they exist that it seems impossible to imagine how it could update itself in the same way that *The Archers* on Radio manages to do. When Susi Hush, one of its recent woman directors tried to do just that, the audience ratings are said to have fallen drastically and she was replaced by someone who respected the old formulas.

Our group are interested in it, as feminists, because a lot of women watch it, enjoy it and identify with it. We wanted to examine the images of women that it contains, and to relate our ideas to some of the theories that have been produced by other feminists in relation to film. We haven't got much further than a rough content analysis and we have yet to work out how this connects with theories

about television as a visual medium, as cultural production and as ideological struggle.

The first obvious fact about the women in the Street is how many of them are strong, independent women from whom much of the action is generated. The men come over as insignificant and marginal in comparison but of course essential as potential love or marriage partners. These women constantly regret being on their own, gossip about their inability to find men or sustain relationships with them and ruefully assert solidarity with other women while also competing with them for the few available men. Their single state is frequently referred to and is often the origin of new story lines.

One of the consequences of this dominance of single women is the absence of nuclear families and the

removal of a whole area of concern and gossip for women — their relationships with children. Since it is impossible to employ child actors for such a long period, the only married couple with a child living with them are Ray and Deidre Langton who have just had a baby. All the other married or divorced women either do not have them or the children live elsewhere and occasionally appear or are referred to. The dramatic effect of this is to convert the private world of the family to the public world of the community. People gossip about each other and discuss each others problems in the pub and the shops. So a large extended family is created, replacing the nuclear family.

This self-enclosed community is also self-regulating. It is very rare for a policeman to appear and if anyone does step out of line, the community soon asserts its values of decency, kindness, tolerance and resignation in the face of "life's rich tapestry". The dialogue itself is often bitchy, humorous, acerbic and sometimes violent but when tragedy occurs clichés close off any active discussion which might disrupt this enclosed world: "Things are never as bad as they seem," "you can't win them all", "I've seen it all, love," "British justice grinds but fairly." (There must be a dictionary of clichés much used by the scriptwriters of *Coronation Street*!) How far they identify this language as typically feminine or just how so-called ordinary people talk, is difficult to know. But the absence of 'big issues' does seem to locate it in the world of women's magazines and afternoon soap operas.

The other effect of the absence of children is that almost all the women work outside the home; they work in service jobs — cleaning, shop-keeping, sewing in the factory, serving at the bar of the pub. In fact work in *Coronation Street* is not large scale factory production but petty bourgeois jobs particularly for the men. This means that often the class attitudes are those of the small business man, setting up on his own rather than the mass factory worker bored out of his mind with his job. Hence the men and the women are much more identified with their work than can be true for most of the Street's audience and this echoes the nostalgia for the days of a supposedly more humane and less alienating work ethic. Class differences are registered — Annie Walker talks posh, Hilda always has her hair in curlers, Ken Barlow wears middle

BOOKS

THE PASSION OF NEW EVE

by Angela Carter

(Gollancz £3.95)

The world of Angela Carter is remote from that 'real' world of the great tradition of women novelists who are concerned with the details of domestic life and the moral dilemmas of love — identifiable and understandable. Carter writes about the weird undergrowth of the imagina-

tion and the imagery of sexual desire.

In *The Passion of New Eve* Evelyn, a young man finds himself alone in a dark disintegrating city, the apotheosis of disorder, decaying and filled with rats 'which grew fat as piglets and vicious as hyenas'. He is seduced by Leilah, the archetypal temptress of popular pornography described with eroticism and spectacular brilliance. Leilah becomes pregnant, he leaves her for a journey into an endless desert to be punished (?) and transformed into a woman by Mama 'the Great Parricide, the Castratrix of the Phallogocentric Universe' then to be degraded him/herself by Zero the sadist and so on in an extraordinary erotic odyssey.

Angela Carter has the strength to confront the darkness of the imagination. She has lost the hesitation of earlier books. In *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) she wrote 'the grocer [was] a hard faced ex-soldier whose right hand lacked a thumb (Melanie wondered had he lopped it off in the bacon slicer? But she never dared ask for fear he would tell her) . . . the grocer treated her to infrequent smiles'. Now she has lost the fear of being told but has become carried away by her own audacity. Her recent books are unrelenting chronicles of the sexually wierd told in a breathless way with none of the changes of mood and sensitivity of the earlier books. She is often intellectually pretentious and her writing is burdened with obscure references.

Angela Carter does not look at the social character of women's lives but she is none the less acutely conscious of individual experience both imagined and real. In *The Magic Toyshop* she describes a first kiss: 'Finn inserted his tongue between her lips . . . The moment consumed her. She choked and struggled, beating her fists against him, convulsed with horror at this sensual and intimate connection, this rude encroachment of her physical privacy, this humiliation'. She makes no moral judgement of her characters' experience but I found it disturbing at times when the themes of women's liberation appear as a topical context for the celebration of the bizarre. She delights, for example, in the grotesque extravagance of Tristressa, perfect image of feminine melancholy and mystery, in fact a man, and Evelyn, once a man, now Eve, remade in Beulah by the Mother Goddess, consummating their

ween the sexes in marriage than we're ever allowed to witness in *Coronation Street*. Presumably the producers worry that if real emotions and conflicts surface, their audience will switch off — though the *Marriage Guidance* documentary was rivetting. Still it's important to work out why so many of us keep watching this fictional world, what are the limitations on their portrayals of women and how this might be changed. □

Jean McCrindle

Member of the Women and Film Group

(For details contact Angie Martin at the British Film Institute.)

POETRY

IF I COME

If I come
I'll be more than a hole
for your stick
picking a way through layers
playing my parts
indiscriminately.

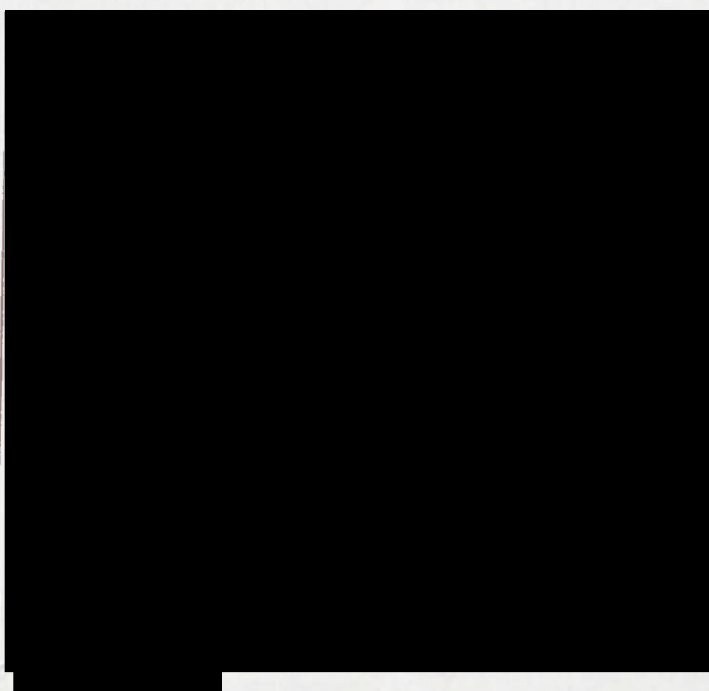
If I come
I'll have to bring her with me.
The child.
She comes and goes.
You'll see her
when I laugh too loud
or cry.
She was denied before
and so comes back
for more.

If I come
my mother will come too.
Sometimes silent
often cold
holding back on you.
And father
arthritic now
he cripples me
we use the same bad leg.

Now can you see
why I still hesitate.

For
If I come
I can't come only me
but bring to you
this multiplicity
of we.

Susan Wallbank



JENNY JONES



forced marriage amongst a display of waxworks.

However she may not have a moral view but she does have a serious purpose expressed in her own maxim 'Myth is more instructive than history'. She explores in her books not gender identity but the iconography of sexuality, and the images through which we express our sexual feelings and which in turn restrict our experience and our view of ourselves and of other people. Popular images of sexuality may be crude but in her view 'our external symbols must always express the life within us with absolute precision; how could they do otherwise since that life has generated them... A critique of these symbols is a critique of our lives'. This

purpose can be seen more clearly in earlier books, for example in *Heroes and Villains* (1969) she takes that perennial fantasy of being raped by a savage and there examines the idea of sex as something foreign, the antithesis of what is ordered and known, and the way desire is diminished by familiarity. *The Passion of New Eve* on the other hand with the central idea of castration is more about power and masochism.

I do not think that she provides a critique but she does explore the symbols of sexuality in an exciting way and may help us to develop our own theory.

Katherine Gieve

Coming next month *Angela Carter on fashion*.

for children

PICTURE BOOKS

THE PROUD WHITE CAT by Ruth Hurlimann, trans Anthea Bell (Kestrel Books £2.50 ISBN 0 7226 5303 4.)

This is a lively, colourful retelling of a medieval fable about stuck-up Tom Cat who can't get himself a wife because he thinks all the other cats are beneath him. He takes this dilemma to 'wise and clever' Mrs Vixen, who subtly shows him that he's got it all wrong "thinking yourself so much better than all the other cats". In fact, "Katy Cat is every bit as fine and clever in every way as you are yourself". Tom is cured of male pride and conceit, and he and Katy Cat get married and live happily ever after. You will have heard that before, but this is an imaginative version of a traditional moral tale, with a rare female sage.

HEATHER'S FEATHERS by Leatie Weiss, illus. Ellen Weiss (Franklin Watts £2.50 85166-617-5)

For children learning to read this is an amusing USA tale about Heather who alone in her class isn't rewarded by the Tooth Fairy, because she's a bird (no teeth). But she makes out with her class mates thanks to the Feather Fairy, i.e. her own moulting feathers which she proudly hands out. Particular recommended for the funny pictures and easy to read text; and the non-sexist Dad in apron (and pipe!) icing a cake.

ELLA CLIMBS A MOUNTAIN by Anita Harper, illus. Michael Jackson (Kestrel Minnow Books £1.30 ISBN 07226 5251 8)

A relaxed tale about a trip up a near-by hill that Ella, with Jill and Sam, make into a pretend mountain climb — just like the one on TV. One of four new *Minnow* titles for children who have just learnt to read — a much neglected group; (see also non-sexist *What Can I Do?* by Marjorie Darke *Spare Rib* No 41) this book is also the best book so far from Anita Harper who for some time now has been committed to non-sexist children's literature. (See in particular *Mummy is a Health Visitor*, *Mummy runs a Cafe* (Blackie 1973 60p each), also *The Robot*, *the Dinosaur*, and *the Hairy Monster* i.e. Rachel, Daphne and Hilary (Blackie 1975 30p). Another good feature of this latest book is the realistic, unself-conscious urban backdrop.

Andrew Mann, Children's Rights Workshop

GRITTY 14 YEAR OLDS

DUST OF THE EARTH by Vera & Bill Cleaver (Oxford University Press £2.95 0-19-271400-7)

TRUE GRIT by Charles Portis (Peacock 50p 0 14047 093 X)

Vera and Bill Cleaver's books fall within the North American tradition of conversational, colloquial first person narrative writing that can be so instantly compelling to the confident young reader; they are unusual in that their narrators are almost always girls.

Fern Dawn, the 14 year old central character of this latest book is a worthy successor to other Cleaver heroines (see in

particular *The Whys and Wherefores of Littabelle Lee* (Hamish Hamilton '74), *Delpha Green and Company* (Collins '75) in her thoughtfulness, ability to cope and struggle to make contact with others on a level that is more than superficial. Set in Dakota in the days of the depression, the Drawn family are trying to make a go of, among other things, sheep farming, and Fern has to be the shepherd. From a family that is not united, the Drawns gradually grow closer and this is the central core of the book — the Cleavers' almost unconventional concern for the quality of living is conveyed stringently and honestly to the young reader.



In the same tradition, *True Grit*, now in paperback, is the book that became a John Wayne film and hopefully this fame will ensure it the wide readership it deserves. Set in the U.S. some years after the Civil War, 14 year old Mattie Ross' father has been pointlessly shot dead by a drunken gunman. Bent on revenge Mattie hires one-eyed marshall Rooster Cogburn who has a reputation for 'true grit' and sets out with him and a Texas Ranger to get her man.

Told in the first person by Mattie, the book has a certain stilted correctness that easily evokes period flavour. Mattie writes with dour sharpness about

people and their motives and emerges as a bright, cranky, determined girl who is absolutely of her time and who is not short herself of 'true grit'.

Both books for 13 years and upwards.

Rosemary Stones, Children's Rights Workshop

FILMS

A STAR IS BORN

The star at the beginning of this movie is John Norman Howard, a strutting proponent of cockrock if ever there was one — played by Kris Kristofferson mainly in bare brown torso sumptuously oiled with sweat (or something). John Norman, as we see him haloed in the shimmer of sour neon on steel instruments, is a stereotype of the piggish, violent, spoilt rock hero. His roadie ritually stands by before every performance to service the star with a snort of cocaine in one fist and a bottle of bourbon in the other. He borrows a Harley Davidson in the middle of a number and rides it offstage, crashing it into thousands of dollars worth of electronics (plus a few hippy onlookers). His home base is a million dollar slum littered with Kentucky chicken cartons.

Slipping away from his entourage one evening in search of some music, he stumbles on Esther Hoffman (Streisand) singing in a club. He's taken by the startling quality of her singing, her nonsense aggressiveness, and her ass. After a bit of to-ing and fro-ing and swooping around in helicopters over impressive Woodstock-like hordes, Esther falls for him (I wanted her to sock him in the jaw) and they get off with each other.

From this point on the star in the ascendant is definitely Esther. I must say I couldn't keep up with the speed of John Norman's metamorphosis from sexist rock pundit to gentle adoring husband — presumably the power of Love (or Woman) brought about such a total transformation.

Rather quickly hard rock loses its attraction for him and his energies turn towards nurturing Esther for fame; he takes on the role of midwife at the birth of this new female star with her more lyrical, soulful style of music.

Esther begins to make it in a big way, while her selfless husband sits at home in their new adobe ranch-house, strumming and dreaming, blocked on rock, writing introverted soft songs with the beginnings of a tortured edge.

In the terms of the movie at least, Esther is singularly un-neurotic. Does success spoil her? Not a bit. She adores John Norman, she loves singing, she wants to be recognised, but not obsessively, she wants her husband to go on writing and performing too; in short, she wants everything. Naively, she reckons without the realities of commerce — and the convolutions of the male ego in the face of female achievement.

For when John Norman is ready to make his comeback he finds himself superseded by the laws of supply and demand in the music business — his manager doesn't think his new style will sell, the

implication being that it hasn't got enough balls. And his band has re-formed with another lead singer. And anyway his manager's time is taken up with Esther's career, by now a very hot commodity. This is where John Norman really gets into difficulties. The system which he's accustomed to riding has no space for his changes, and he can't admit that he's losing.

So of course he can't cope with his anger and hurt, and certainly not with his envy of Esther. All her attempts to get him to talk about his feelings come to nothing, and

he retreats into a slavish worship of her, muffling his violence completely. So he becomes the absolute reverse of what he was before — from sexist power-freak to masochistic self-abasing dependent.

But anger will out somehow, and the conflict in him reaches its peak in a scene where he's howling along a desert road in his Maserati. He puts on one of his own cassettes — 'Are you a figment of my imagination or am I a figment of yours?' — then he snatches it out and replaces it with one of Esther's. The car accelerates.

Disappears over the brow of a hill. Cut to accident scene and distraught Esther. The most petulant suicide ever.

As John Norman passes into rock legend, Esther sings at his memorial concert. She opens in lyrical style, then halfway through swings into hard, driving rock. In the context of John's self-destruction, the way she integrates his style and energy into her own work (and soars to even greater heights of stardom, presumably) seems to imply that she is a sinister beast indeed — rather like the praying mantis who ingests the male after

mating. Perhaps this message wasn't carefully worked out but who knows what anxieties the scriptwriters were tapping when they wove this very contemporary fable? Certainly their forecast for equality between the sexes was pretty gloomy, with the alternatives for men posed as despot or slave, and definitely nothing in between. And as for women, well, get the old message, girls, and in pounding stereo — you still can't have a career and a man. Not that your man will actively hold you back — he'll just destroy himself in protest.

Alison Fell



Seven Beauties Wertmuller's interest in role reversal

◀ *Swept Away*... contented sado-masochism

Directed by
LISA WERTMULLER

SWEPT AWAY

'Swept Away...' is a recent Italian film due to hit British cinemas soon. It has been hailed enthusiastically by New York critics: I can see why. It shows, in the age-old tradition, how proud woman succumbs to lusty man — and loves it. Another triumph for 'human nature' and male domination.

Aboard a yacht on the Mediterranean, Raffaella, a rich woman straight out of the pages of Italian *Vogue*, harangues her companions and the male deckhands. Tanning her limbs, she passes acute comments on the politics of the Communist Party, particularly its reluctance to fight for women's demands. At the same time, she displays all the characteristics of a spoilt woman, taking great pleasure in humiliating the servants, especially the Sicilian Gennarino.

From the outset, there is strong sexual and social tension between Raffaella and Gennarino. She the rich bitch, beautiful and hateful, product of privilege; he, the poor Sicilian Communist militant, victim of economic under-

development. The film centres on the resolution of their antagonism, acted out on a small island where the two become stranded. On the yacht, Raffaella held power by virtue of her wealth and status — the only way that women can hold power in our society. On the island, 'nature' holds sway and the roles are reversed. She is forced to beg for the food he knows how to catch, and for the shelter he has found; he revels in revisiting his former humiliation on her, compelling her to wash his trousers and kiss his feet. His final revenge is to physically assault her, prepare to rape her and then desist, declaring that her body is not enough — he must have her love too.

Thus Raffaella becomes enslaved, calling Gennarino 'lord' and 'master', delighting in her degradation; and in sunsets on sand-dunes they make love and play carefree savages. Through wind and water her make-up remains flawless and her body is draped in flimsy black garments, presenting the just-raped look currently so popular in the cinema. Here we are shown human beings, free from the strictures of society, acting out their 'natural' desires — a dangerously seductive picture of contented sado-masochism.

Or 'epic physical battles of the sexes', as the *New York Times* said.

Like every idyll, this one is too good to last. Rescue comes, and Raffaella is returned to her weedy husband, obviously no sexual match for the rough proletarian Gennarino, but preferable because he is of her class. The status quo, momentarily threatened by passion, is restored.

At one level, the message is clear: at exceptional times, sexual relations can dominate class relations — but only on a temporary basis. But

there are also undercurrents. What are we to make, for instance, of Raffaella's support for abortion on demand? And Gennarino's love and respect for the Communist Party together with his belief in the subjugation of women? Are feminism and Communism reactionary, or simply irrelevant. 'Swept Away...' is disappointing because it raises difficult questions about sex, class and eroticism which should be explored by women directors; yet its impact is to reinforce many man-made myths.

SEVEN BEAUTIES

'Swept Away...' was Lina Wertmuller's third film; 'Seven Beauties' is, appropriately, her seventh. In many respects it is more successful, although its achievement is still far from that claimed by the critics. It tells the story of Pasqualino, a cocky, clownish Neapolitan whose adventures in a Nazi concentration camp in World War Two are combined with flashbacks to his pre-war past in Naples, where he ran an all-women sweatshop. Among the employees are his seven sisters (Seven Beauties), all dependent for livelihood and protection, all big, sloppy

and stupid in contrast with his dandied Brylcreem arrogance. The Seven Beauties are the basis for Pasqualino's male self-definition — his possession of them gives him confidence that he can handle any woman. Wertmuller attempts to explore the intricate connections between power over women and male honour, set against the background of extreme human degradation represented both by the Naples slums and by the Stalag.

Honour is the touchstone of Pasqualino's value code, inseparable from his male ego. Honour is the justification for murdering his sister's pimp, whom he then cuts up

into suitcase-size pieces and despatches by train to three different destinations, in a bizarre sequence of tragedy and farce. Confined to a mental hospital, his instinct for survival rapidly replaces honour as his motive force, and he wheedles his way into the affections of the elderly woman in charge to obtain release into the Italian Army. The Army is no escape from the asylum, as Pasqualino realises when he lands up in a Nazi concentration camp; but where other prisoners resign themselves to submission and cower before destiny, his instinct for survival is sharpened. Locating the power pinnacle of the camp — a heavy woman Kommandant, caricature of a Teutonic goddess — he sets out to win her heart. His boldness stems from the notion that all women need love (flattery) — so, if he was successful pinching bottoms in Naples, why not try serenading the ogre who has his life at her disposal? Commanded to 'fuck or die', he makes hideous love with the woman Nazi and is awarded a contradictory reprieve as work boss of his stalag, responsible for selecting men for execution. This dubious promotion is the nadir of his descent from honour of any kind: it proves the well-worn maxim that the most vile acts are possible when survival is at stake.

Several themes obviously have a particular fascination for Wertmuller. She shares with many male directors a striking preoccupation with sado-masochism: Pasqualino rapes a mental patient bound

hand and foot to a metal bedstead; the camp Kommandant has a predilection for seeing men whipped, and even carries her own little metal whip as an accessory to her jackboots. It sets the close links between sexual and social power in a clever parody of 'kinky' fantasy, but goes no further. Connected with this is Wertmuller's interest in role reversal, shown through Pasqualino's regression from a man with power over women to the abject slave of a woman with power over men. We are left with the feeling that she is pointing to important gaps in our understanding of sex and power, but filling them with a mixture of slapstick humour, negativity and hopelessness. Her hero is too much of a clown for his violence to be taken seriously, and her only noble characters choose death as their solution.

Perhaps it is this epic pessimism which has earned Wertmuller critical accolades and dubbed her successor to Fellini and Bergman — or perhaps it is simply the fact that she is a successful woman director in a male world. Either way, the claims are inflated. Wertmuller is certainly in the mainstream of European film-making; her work is often cinematically beautiful and sometimes provocative. I would like to see her reduce the sweep of her canvas to explore her central themes in greater depth and with more awareness that human relations are an area not only for comment and observation but also for struggle.

Karen Margolis

PLAYS

Exhibition

THE ELIZABETH

GARRETT

ANDERSON

EXHIBITION

The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Exhibition, held in London during May, really did have the kind of immediacy its organisers aimed for. They wanted to show 'the living aspect of her Hospital as it is today' as well as to document 'the life and work of its Founder', and they were determined that the material be shown inside the hospital's building on the Euston Road.

More than 500 people came, including patients and their visitors, workers in other London hospitals — the relevant unions had been involved with the campaign to save the EGA anyway and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's very fine biographer, Jo Manton. I went twice; both times there was a lot of coming and going in the hospital's small Board Room. People were looking through suffrage postcards and books of press cuttings dating from 1914. The stewards — one of them a retired porter, who'd worked eighteen years at the EGA and had come back for the exhibition — were very keen to tell you about the photos and to show you round.

Ex-EGA nurse Angela Tilly, now teaching in a South London infants school, organised the exhibition with help from one of the ward sisters. The project began several months ago when a small display on the EGA was prepared for a local History Workshop; it was enlarged and shown in the hospital's nurses' home. This third exhibition includes material from the Fawcett Library and the archives of the EGA and the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, founded

in 1874 as the London School of Medicine for Women.

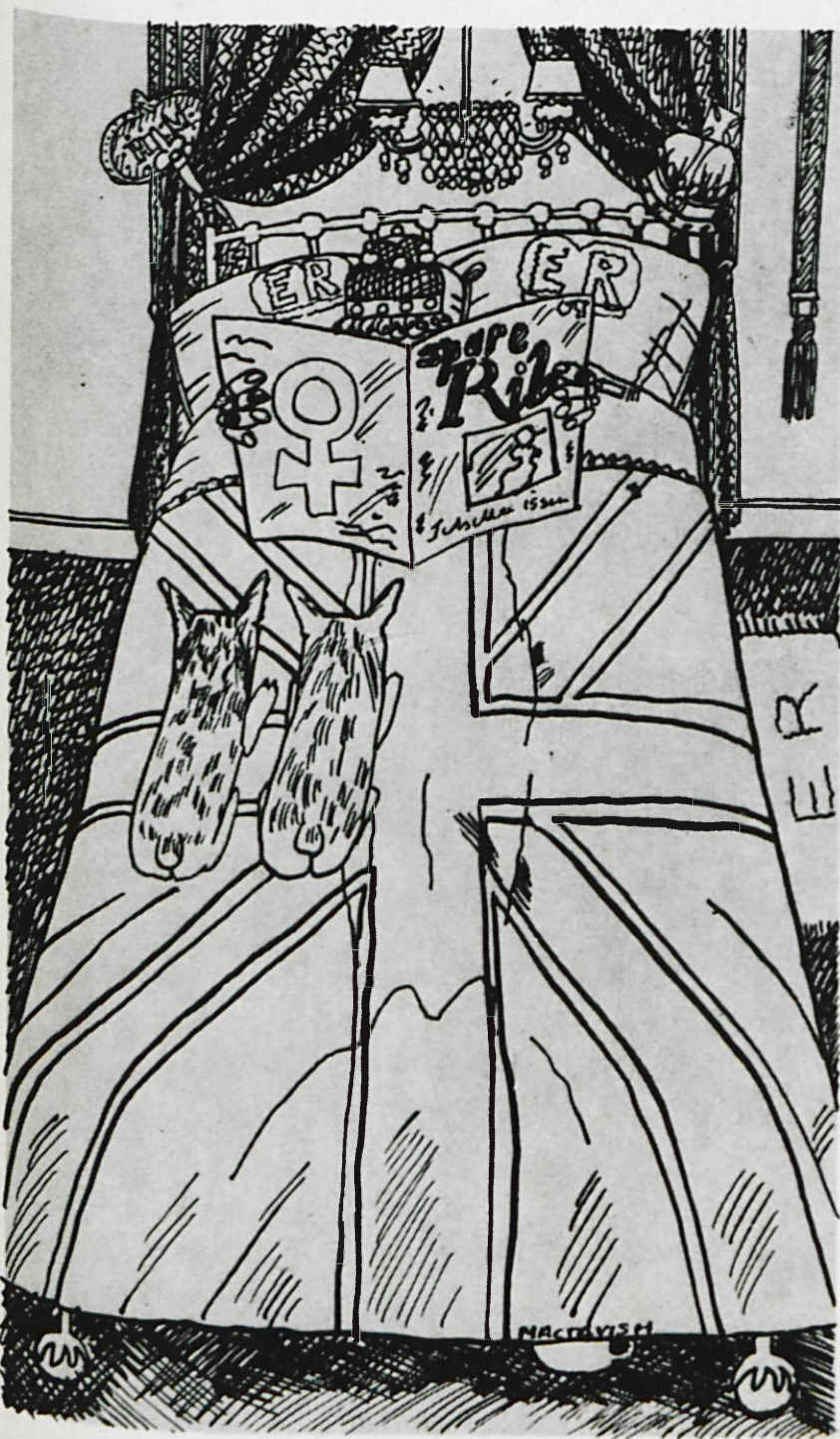
Historical material was mounted on boards in the centre of the room, contemporary material round the walls. A marvellous collection of sepia prints showed women at work in the hospital's wards, dispensary and operating theatre, this last including the rather curious admonition 'Silence During Operations' (what was the state of anaesthesia?). You could move from a memo of Dr Garrett Anderson's in 1871: 'Women are not harmed by regular and steady work; on the contrary, many of the most miserable cases of nervous weakness in women are due to want of it', to a series of children's writings and drawings done since the start of the current campaign to keep the hospital on its present site. A six year old described Elizabeth Garrett Anderson as having 'studied in a little room. There was a new rule in France that women could be doctors. She was the first woman doctor to treat women and children.'

If the state of medical care during the 19th century came across in Florence Nightingale's terse longhand — 'The first thing for a Hospital is that it should do the Patients no harm' — the exhibition's relationship to a continuing activism was clear as soon as I left the building. I came out by the side of Euston station; facing me on a hoarding, in white spray paint, were the words *EGA Stays OK*. They were as much the 'living aspect' as anything inside.

Ann Scott



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